

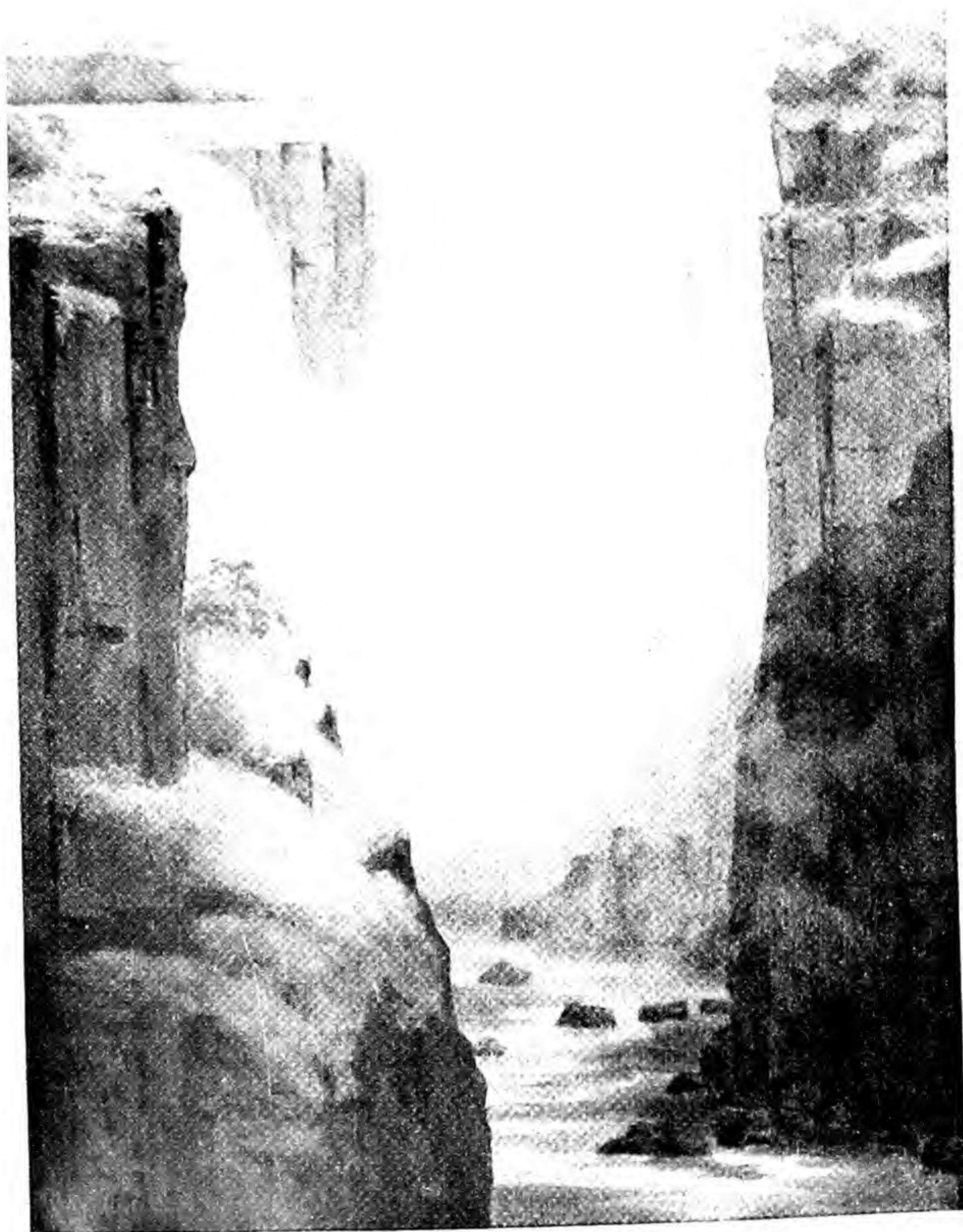


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VICTORIA FALLS ON THE ZAMBEZI Page 31



PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

# SOUTH AFRICA

BY

DUDLEY KIDD

AUTHOR OF "SAVAGE CHILDHOOD," "THE ESSENTIAL  
KAFIR," "KAFIR SOCIALISM"

SECOND EDITION

WITH EIGHT FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS  
IN COLOUR BY A. M. GOODALL

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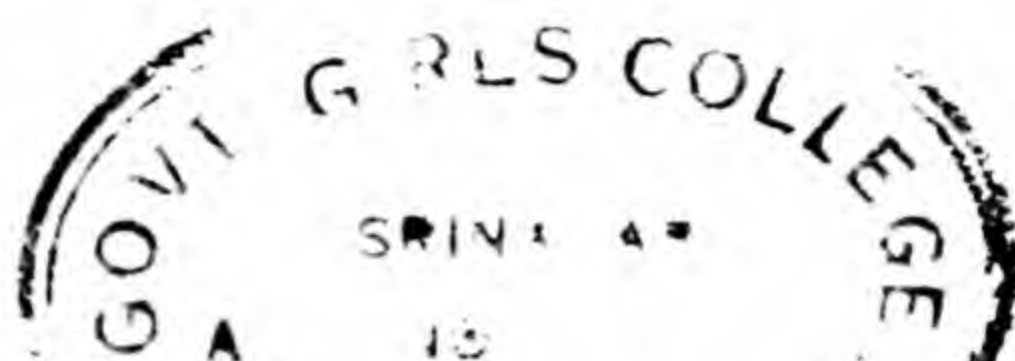


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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE original edition of this little work on South Africa, written by the late Mr. Dudley Kidd, appeared in 1908. In the light of the widespread developments which have taken place in South Africa since that date, the volume really represents a series of impressionistic studies of South Africa in retrospect rather than a connected account of the country as it is to-day. The book has recently been revised in certain details for the purpose of this edition, but the reminiscent vein in which it was compiled is such that to have brought it wholly up to date would have necessitated rewriting the volume completely, and thereby much of its original charm and interest would have been lost.

Mr. Dudley Kidd's descriptions of life in the "early days," including life on the road, the *veld* and the farms, the diamond diggings and the gold fields of the Rand, remain fascinating and accurate accounts of South Africa as it was in the period from about 1860 to 1900. That period marks what the late author frequently referred to as the "good old days," before the advent of railways into the interior. Since the beginning of the present century, however, South Africa has been opened up with a comprehensive transportation system of close upon 15,000 miles of railways, while its road



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systems have been extended through all parts of the four provinces of the Cape of Good Hope, Orange Free State, the Transvaal, and Natal, which, with the Mandate Territory of South-West Africa (a late German colony) comprise what is known as the Dominion of the Union of South Africa, an area about three-quarters of a million square miles in extent.

At the time when Mr. Dudley Kidd penned his descriptions it was inevitable that he should have drawn rather clear distinctions between Dutch and English. With the passage of time since the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) and the subsequent consummation of the Union of South African States in 1910, the racial dividing lines between Boer and Briton have become less and less pronounced, and the ideal of a South African nationality, entailing a gradual fusion of the interests of both Dutch- and English-speaking citizens on a complete equality, has taken definite shape.

The primitive conditions of travel described in this volume have been superseded by up-to-date railway services, while the automobile has largely replaced the ox-wagon as the principal vehicle of road transport. Life in the Kafir kraals, which Mr. Kidd touched off to such advantage, remains much the same in essentials ; but the Kafir has become an increasingly important element in the economic and sociological structure of this Dominion. With the linking up of towns and villages by branch and trunk lines of railways and new road systems, the general conditions of life in outlying centres have improved immeasurably. Roads and

## Preface to the Second Edition

rivers have been bridged, agricultural, industrial, and commercial enterprises have been extended, and though many of the fascinating thrills of the pioneering days have passed, the general conditions and amenities of life which have replaced those older characteristics have combined to make the South Africa of to-day a very different country from that which Mr. Kidd described so happily and effectively.

At the present time South Africa is the world's largest producer of gold and diamonds ; but it has also advanced into the front ranks as a producer of raw products such as wool, mohair, maize, wattle bark, skins and hides, fruits, dairy products, wines, base minerals, metals, etc. It is competing successfully in the markets of the world to-day in all these commodities, and its large ports at Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth, Mossel Bay, and Cape Town witness daily a brisk inwards and outwards trade with all countries. It is a country faced with many problems, but it is equally rich in opportunities, and it calls essentially to youth.

G. E. CHITTENDEN.



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SKETCH-MAP OF SOUTH AFRICA



# SOUTH AFRICA

## CHAPTER I

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

THE first impression the visitor usually receives when the mail boat steams into Table Bay is one of exhilaration. There is something so invigorating in the sunshine, so stimulating in the crystal-clear air, so enchanting in the brilliance of the colouring, that a man must be sluggish indeed if he does not feel that it is good to be alive. If he has been pent up between city walls in dear, dingy London for half a lifetime, he may in self-defence have often consoled himself with the poetical conceit that "Dark, and true, and tender is the North," and may have sought to draw what comfort he could from the absurd antithesis, "False and fickle is the South;" but when actually in this southern clime, "intimations" from the days of his childhood will be revived and intensified, and he will feel that "the sunshine is a glorious birth." World-travel, no less than Jonathan's forbidden honey, is a wonderful enlightener of the eyes.

One cannot get away from the fact that in all lands lying beneath the Southern Cross there is a certain charm not to be found in northern latitudes, though what that something precisely is, it is difficult to state. The air seems to have been washed white and clean;



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and on a southern night, not only does the moon seem brighter, clearer, and less wan than it does in Europe, but also the stars shine with a deeper vividness and beauty. The very formation of Table Mountain, flanked as it is on one side by the Devil's Peak and on the other by the enormous Lion couchant, is so novel to northern eyes, that the visitor feels he is in a new land indeed. Table Mountain, towering three or four thousand feet above the town sleeping in the sunshine at its base, seems to throw out wide-stretched arms to welcome to its bosom all comers, and at the same time to close all avenues of escape up-country. The beauty of Table Bay, with its magnificent sweep and curve, and with its sub-tropical wealth of colour, comes as a surprise to most people, and is for that reason singularly impressive.

In recent years South Africa has come into great favour as a land of travel, due chiefly to its healthy and invigorating climate and the national attractions of the country combined with the modern facilities for cheap travel. It is no longer looked upon as a barbarous country.

I remember well a young missionary who laboured under the impression that the moment he disembarked with his white umbrella, he would find a crowd of naked savages sitting under a palm tree waiting for him to commence operations at once. I am speaking, of course, of the "good old days," thirty to forty years ago, before the country was as well known as it is to-day.

On entering the docks, the ship is met by a cosmo-



## First Impressions

politan crowd. The European element is predominant, but the presence of the coloured Malays and the darker-skinned Kafirs supplies the picturesque touch for the visitor from Europe. Most of the Europeans are dressed for comfort rather than for show, though here and there a silk hat is seen amongst the crowd waiting to welcome the mail-boat. The visitor at once feels at home. Not only does he hear the English tongue everywhere, not only does he see the Union Jack flying, not only does he find English money current, but, if he is fortunate, he may occasionally see English hansom cabs drawn up in line to greet him. Where these antiquated vehicles came from is a never-ending puzzle ; they look as if they might have been early attempts made by our rude forefathers to build these "gondolas of Piccadilly"; the designers must have been acutely conscious that the cabs were made so awkwardly that there was nothing to do with them but to ship them abroad, for in those days anything was thought good enough for the colonies. Be that as it may, once he has seen the Cape Town hansom cabs, the visitor can no longer feel himself a foreigner and a stranger amidst an alien civilisation.

On driving out of the docks, the visitor passes through one of the ugliest parts of Cape Town, but soon finds himself in fine, broad, spacious streets, which were marked out in the olden days of bullock-waggons. In certain streets an old-world atmosphere prevails. The dwellings are low and flat-roofed, and the windows are fitted with heavy Venetian shutters. The houses are all washed in a light colour, for they



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are built for warm weather. This may give the new comer the impression that he is in a foreign land, but yet it is delightful to be in a climate where it is necessary to make arrangements for the shutting out of sunshine. In Adderley Street there are several fine buildings. It is a broad and imposing thoroughfare which in the old days of the Cape used to be known as the Heerengracht or Gentleman's Way. To-day it is the principal shopping centre of the city. In one or two of the side-streets a palm tree may be found carrying on a precarious existence, so that the town looks like some hybrid resulting from the union of the Eastern and Western worlds. At the top of Adderley Street a glorious old oak avenue, its heavy shade flecked and dappled with sunlight, leads past the Houses of Parliament to the Botanical Gardens in which all sorts of tropical plants seem to find themselves thoroughly at home.

After London, or indeed after Johannesburg, Cape Town seems a somnolent city, though it is wide awake to-day in comparison to what it was in the placid days of olden times when the Dutch closed their shops for two or three hours during the midday heat so that they might take their dinner in leisure and enjoy their *bietjie slaap*—forty winks—before returning to work at three o'clock. But such golden days of ease can only be found nowadays in charming and primitive Dutch villages up-country.

It is customary for the new comer to take a drive up the Kloof Road, which runs high above the town, passing over the shoulder or saddle that lies between



## First Impressions

Table Mountain and the Lion's Head. The ascent of the road can be made by tramway, and the route opens up a series of delightful surprises in scenic vistas. The road passes between rows of flowering shrubs, most of which we carefully cultivate in our conservatories at home, while through the gaps in the hedges can be seen orange trees laden with fruit, clumps of deep green pomegranate all aflame with brilliant scarlet flowers, and acres of grape vines. On reaching the edge of the shoulder, a halt is made close to the silver trees whose pale silver-green leaves, set off by the sombre foliage of the pines, shimmer like aspens in the cool breeze. Scrambling up the hill a little distance from the road, one can command a view of the Lion's Head, Cape Town, and Table Bay with its cobalt-blue water fringed with a thin curving line of white sea-foam where the water meets the yellow sand ; while far away on the horizon—in winter time—can be seen snow-clad mountains. Turning one's head, and without moving from the spot, an entirely new scene appears : Camps Bay scintillating in a dazzling blaze of sunlight opens to view while the Twelve Apostles stretch away into the distance, their feet buried in a thick pine forest which reaches almost to the water's edge.

The first impression of the suburbs of Cape Town is wholly delightful. Table Mountain or the Devil's Peak are ever seen towering in the background, though the luxurious, sub-tropical foliage in the foreground presents endless variety. Even in winter the suburbs are as green as is the country-side in England during the summer : in the spring-time the gardens



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seem to hold a perpetual carnival of colour. The beauty of the Avenue at Bishop's Court, and of the roads at Wynberg are, since the Boer War, too well-known to need description.

On running down by rail past Muizenberg to Kalk Bay—the Brighton of the Cape—it seems to the visitor that there is something in the scenery dimly familiar to him ; but when he gets close to Simonstown—the Portsmouth of South Africa—it suddenly strikes him how much like certain parts of the French and Italian Riviera are the formation and colouring of the coast line ; though if he keeps a bright look-out from the train window he may, if he is lucky, see a fish hooked and landed by anglers on the foreshore, and so discover how unlike False Bay is to the Mediterranean.

It is not until the time arrives for taking tickets for an up-country journey that people receive their first impression of the size of South Africa. The journey from Cape Town to Johannesburg, for example, is close upon 1,000 miles, and for the greater part of that distance the rail routes to the north traverse enormous open spaces very sparsely populated and characterised by the greatest diversities of scene and climate. The sparsity of settlement applies particularly to the fascinating region known as the Karroo—a dry and bracing plateau, seemingly devoid of life, but in reality one of the finest sheep-farming areas in the world. It is heavily stocked with Merinos, whose wool is highly prized in Bradford.

Beyond the Karroo are the fertile plains of the



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Orange Free State, and further inland the rolling uplands of the Transvaal, where Johannesburg, the Metropolis of the country, is situated at an altitude of nearly 6,000 feet.

## CHAPTER II

### DIAMONDS

CLOSE to the banks of the Orange River there lies the little Dutch village of Hope Town, which nestles beneath some *koppies*. It is here that the first diamond was discovered in 1867. The story of the finding of the rough gem has been told many times and in many ways. When I was at Hope Town long ago I was given the following account of the event. The children of a Dutch farmer were fond of playing with a small stone that had a soapy appearance. A visitor calling at the farm had his attention drawn to the stone, and asked the mother of the children whether she would sell it to him. She laughed at the idea of selling a pebble, and gave it to her visitor. The stone was examined by many different people, and at last all doubts were expelled as to its nature, for it was pronounced by experts to be a diamond. It was soon discovered that some of the Griquas in the district possessed similar pebbles, which were accordingly bought for next to nothing, though they were ultimately sold for many thousands of pounds. It was some years, however, before there was a rush to the district, for



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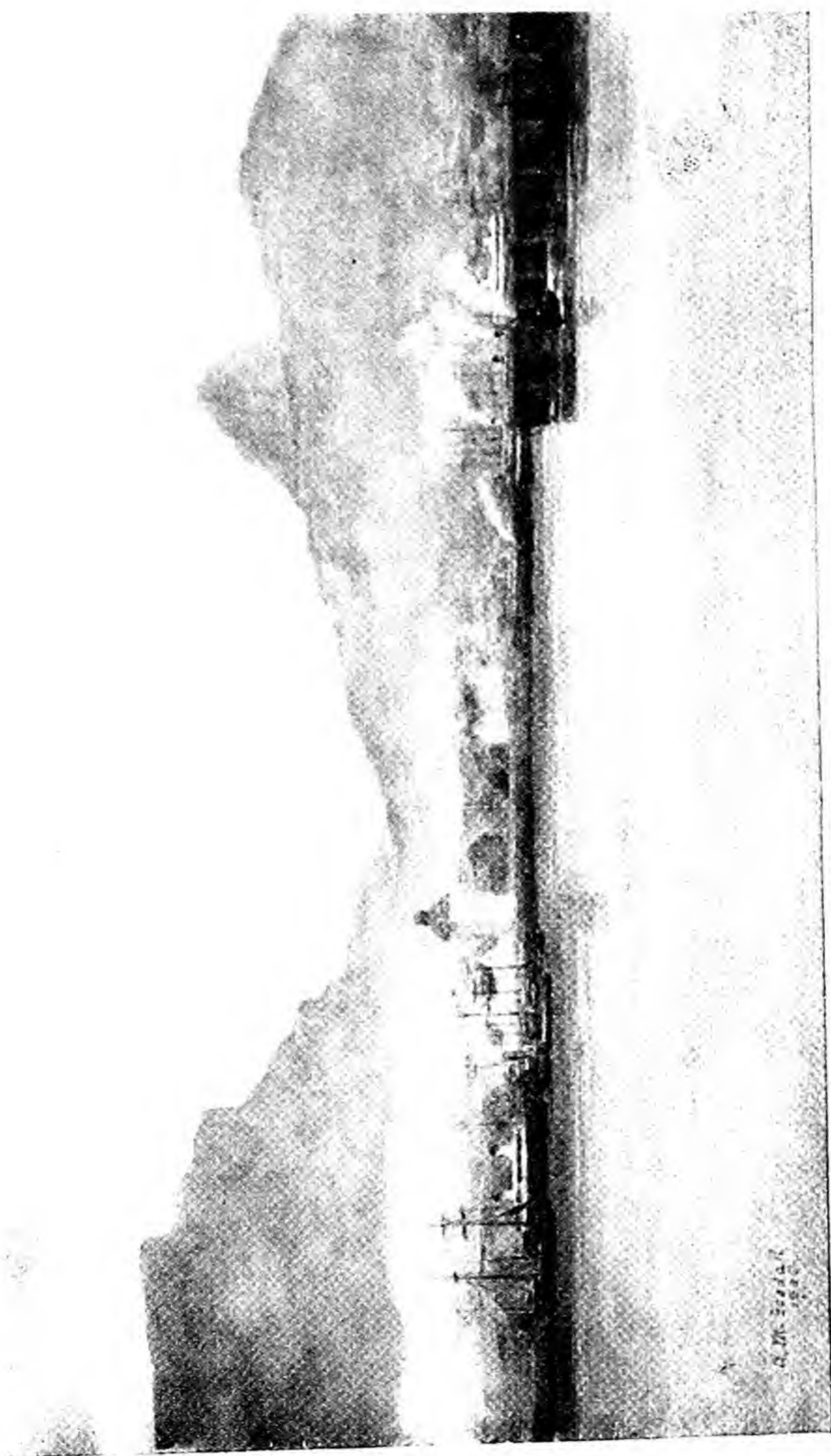
even the Geological Society in England scouted the idea that the district was diamondiferous.

At first a search was made for diamonds in the river-beds, and these river diggings provided a splendid opportunity for poor people to make a fortune. Natives were employed to excavate the bed of the stream and to hand up bucketsful of gravel, which the white men and their wives proceeded to wash and sort. In those days the tedious journey from the coast had to be made by coaches or by bullock-waggons, and transport was consequently extremely costly. The early diggers passed their exciting and eventful lives in the open air, and at night retired into the strangest patchwork erections made out of old packing-cases or even big barrels, though a few more fortunate people brought tents with them.

Later on it was discovered that there were dry diggings in the region where Kimberley now stands. Claims were pegged out, and the loose yellow sandy soil was rocked on cradles so that the diamonds might be sifted out. The luck of different people varied in the most marked fashion. Two partners might work day and night for a month on their claim, and might find only a few tiny diamonds insufficient to pay for their working expenses. In disgust they would sell their claim for a mere nothing, and during the next few days the new owners would find diamonds worth thousands of pounds. I have often met people in South Africa who have complained of one long, unbroken spell of bad luck, first of all at Kimberley, then at Koffefontein, then at Jaegersfontein, then at the Bar-







CAPE TOWN AND TABLE MOUNTAIN. PAGE 1.

A. M. F. 1880

## Diamonds

berton Goldfields, and finally at Johannesburg ; while in all these cases the men who followed in their track, and who began where they left off, made considerable fortunes. In Europe we have heard much about the successful, but little about the unfortunate, hunters for gold and diamonds.

When the people at the dry diggings had sorted all the loose sandy earth on the surface, they found to their dismay that they came down to what seemed to be solid rock. A panic ensued, and people sold their claims for what they could get. Their condition of mind may be imagined when it was discovered that the blue earth that was thought to be so valueless was infinitely richer in diamonds than was the surface yellow sand. The blue ground was very much more difficult to work, for it had to be excavated by blasting and then exposed to the disintegrating influence of the weather for a long period. When spread out in a thin layer the blue earth slowly crumbles, and the diamonds are easily separated out. But to handle the blue ground in this fashion requires capital, and so companies were started and claims were bought up. In order to keep up the price of diamonds it was found necessary to limit the output, and so the various companies were finally amalgamated, largely by Cecil Rhodes, into the present De Beer's monopoly.

Those old days before the railway were indeed grand times. The most strange conditions of life prevailed, and it is difficult for people living in sober old England to realise the peculiar charm and freedom and fascination of life in a mining camp. The very difficulties of



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the life did but add to its zest. Prices of things were fabulous, and vegetables would sometimes reach the most fancy prices. I have myself known cauliflowers sold at Johannesburg for £1 apiece. Hotel proprietors would bid against hotel proprietors, and recklessly run up the price of such things so that the luxury might appear on their menu, even though it was insufficient so serve for a dozen guests. In the early days of Rhodesia, to give another example, I have had to pay five shillings a pint for milk, whereas it was difficult to buy eggs even at five shillings apiece. Yet I have in other districts bought eighteen eggs from Kafirs for a small box of matches. At Umtali, the place I am speaking of, a young Englishman walked into the hotel (the rough shanty went by this name) where I was staying, and ordered breakfast for himself and two friends. He bespoke eggs and bacon for three, and when the first nine eggs had been eaten he repeated his order, as he and his friends had just come into camp from a week's tramp across country and were ravenous. In a light-hearted way he called for his bill, and found to his astonishment that it came to five guineas. His eighteen eggs at five shillings apiece cost him £4 10s., while the rest of the breakfast cost only fifteen shillings. It is said he never invited his friends to egg-breakfasts again.

In the early days of Kimberley, a number of diamonds were stolen either by the white men or by the natives who were employed at the diggings. A brisk traffic in illicit diamonds took place, for it is comparatively easy to hide so small a thing as a



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diamond, the natives freely swallowing it so as to escape detection. It was therefore necessary to institute an odious search-system, and to pass the most exceptional and stringent laws so as to put a stop to this I.D.B., as this illicit diamond buying was called. The very smartest detectives were engaged, and the abominable trap-system was instituted, for it seemed to be the only possible way of checking the abuse. The skill shown in the way these traps were prepared was almost fiendish ; and though no doubt many real offenders were thus sentenced to long terms of hard labour on the Cape Town breakwater, yet many of those who were caught were probably but the tools of the men who employed them, who amassed vast fortunes, and who lived honoured in Society. It was certainly a new sensation for a stranger visiting Kimberley to feel he might be at the mercy of anyone who should choose to place a rough unregistered diamond in his pocket or in his portmanteau, and then give secret information against him.

Endless stories, highly embroidered, are told of chases by the police who were pursuing men who had stolen diamonds and who were trying to escape across the border into the Orange Free State, which was but a few miles away. A man, for example, would make his horse swallow some diamonds and would then race to the border, pursued by the police. On crossing into the Orange Free State, the man would dismount, pull out his revolver, shoot his horse in the presence of the police, extract the diamonds, and enjoy a good laugh.

Many were the explanations offered as to the origin



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of these gems, but as the patches of blue earth became worked, the opinion gained ground that this enormously rich area was nothing less than the crater of an extinct volcano. Scientists have now but very little doubt as to how diamonds were formed. When carbon is heated under normal conditions in the absence of oxygen, it passes into the gaseous state without liquifying: but when heated under enormous pressure, it liquifies, and on cooling crystallises out in the form of diamonds. The process can be imitated in an experimental fashion by heating carbon and iron in an electric furnace. The molten iron dissolves the carbon. If the iron be suddenly cooled, it solidifies on the surface, and on contracting exerts an enormous pressure on the molten metal within. By the combined effect of intense heat and immense pressure, small diamonds are formed within the iron. By the aid of acid, the iron can be dissolved away, leaving minute diamonds behind.

Kimberley is to-day a very different place from what it once was. The former diamond digging camp is one of the largest towns in South Africa, and an important strategical point on the main route of railway between Cape Town and the interior. Kimberley to-day has a European population of about 20,000, and an equal number of coloured inhabitants. It is well laid out with spacious streets, though the central portion is irregular in its lay-out on account of the fact that certain of the main thoroughfares follow the lines of the old mining camp. The surrounding district is inclined to be flat and monotonous, but the town itself has been made very attractive, with pleasing



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gardens and residences and handsome public buildings. The working of the diamond mines under modern conditions always provides a study of interest, particularly the old Kimberly Mine, a worked-out crater some thirty-eight acres in area and many hundreds of feet deep. Apart from its diamond mines, Kimberley has very interesting associations connected with Cecil Rhodes and the famous siege of the town during the Anglo-Boer War.

The chief diamond mines are the Kimberley Mine, the De Beers, the Bulfontein, the Du Toits Pan, and the Wesselton Mine. Among the largest stones found in the mines the Porter-Rhodes diamond, which weighed 152 carats and was valued at £60,000, was taken out of the Kimberley Mine.

In 1917 a large diamond weighing 442 carats, said to be the most valuable found in the Kimberley area, was obtained from the Du Toits Pan. An imperfect stone of 503 carats was taken from the De Beers Mine in 1896, though the prize stone from that mine weighed  $428\frac{1}{2}$  carats.

A visit to a native compound is of great interest. In the midst of an enormous quadrangle of corrugated-iron rooms, placed on the lee of high substantial walls, can be seen scores of natives sitting about half-naked, chatting, smoking hemp, making bangles, gambling or bathing in a large tank which serves as a swimming bath, or else lying down sleeping in the shade. At the change of shift there is a stir and one can see, emerging from the bowels of the earth, black demon-like figures soaked in perspiration, their eyes and teeth, as well as



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the wet prominent ridges of their bodies glistening in the dark. These are the men who bring to the surface the blue ground which is at once carried off in trolleys to the floors where the stuff is exposed to the weather: when, after months of exposure, the blue ground is disintegrated, it is finally taken to the pulsator, and the diamonds are picked out and sorted. While the visitor is inspecting trays full of rough gems that are shown to him, he feels strangely uncomfortable, he knows not why. At length he discovers that the eyes of detectives have been watching him narrowly when he least expected it. He generally comes to the conclusion that Kimberley is an interesting but a rather uncanny place.

## CHAPTER III

### GOLD

SOUTH AFRICA is full of minerals, and gold is found in a great many districts. In the early days there was much hunting for nuggets, and at such places as Lydenburg the search was moderately successful; for though no enormous nuggets were found, a number of small ones varying from a few ounces up to a couple of hundred ounces were discovered. The main gold industry of South Africa, however, is concerned not with such patchy deposits but with extensive reefs consisting of rock which frequently shows no sign of visible gold. Johannesburg is placed in the centre of the Rand, or



## Gold

ridge, which runs for thirty miles or more through a high plateau in the Transvaal some 6,000 feet above sea-level. It is said that the original farm where Johannesburg now stands was offered for sale in the seventies for £30; it was not, however, till the middle of the eighties that it became clear that payable gold was to be found. The metal is scattered through very hard quartz, in the form of a fine powder or dust, and the working of the material requires heavy machinery, much metallurgical skill, and considerable capital. The Rand is not a poor man's diggings, though thousands of miners have made what for them are fortunes by means of steady work.

There was a most peculiar charm about the place in the early days. After a long coach journey from Kimberley or Vryburg, or else from Newcastle in Natal, the traveller found himself approaching the Golden City. A large crowd invariably gathered round the coach when it arrived. As the coach with its twelve horses or mules—the horses were as a rule only used for the last stage of the journey—came sweeping round the corners of the streets, people would stop to watch the inimitable skill with which the drivers managed their teams. The air seemed filled with a fine impalpable powder for dust lay thick on the roads, only to be stirred up by every passing bullock-waggon. The dust-laden air of the streets was in marked contrast with the almost painfully clear atmosphere outside the town.

On leaving the coach the passengers made their way on foot to the hotels, followed by half-civilised Kafirs



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carrying their luggage, which was strangely scanty owing to the enormous rates charged by the coaches for excess luggage. The traveller soon found himself in a sort of big wooden box which had to do duty for a bedroom, and for which he paid at an enormous rate. Money was of no concern in those days, for its circulation was wonderfully free. Even up to the time of the Boer War, in 1899-1902, the silver threepenny-piece was the smallest coin in use. But in the earliest days of a mining camp even silver is scarce. Thus, when I first visited Umtali in Rhodesia, the banks charged a heavy premium on silver, and consequently the five-shilling paper note was frequently the smallest sum to change hands. On purchasing an article that cost, say, three shillings, the storekeeper would say, "What will you take to make it up to five shillings?" or else would suggest leaving payment for a future visit. When visiting the place a year later, the silver shilling was in evidence, and one of the early settlers said to me, "I think it's time to move on: one can't do much now that shillings are in general circulation."

Johannesburg in the early days was a surprisingly orderly place—for a mining camp. Contrary to usage in civilised Europe it was the people who kept the police in order; and since the Zarps (as the Transvaal police were called) were all easy-going Dutchmen, they soon found it convenient, when any trouble arose, to have pressing business in the next street, and to leave the people to settle their own troubles in their own way, instead of disturbing the peace by their official and needless interference. The essential spirit of the place



## Gold

was one of fair-play ; and “ Give him a chance,” was the expression heard on all sides. Did two dogs quarrel in the street, a crowd would gather round them, and they would be left to fight it out, after the people had assured themselves that neither dog was unfairly handicapped. A big dog would not be allowed to bully a little one, and I have frequently seen some ferocious big dog pulled away by its tail, legs, and ears, when it attempted to worry a smaller one. Did two newspaper-boys quarrel ? A crowd would gather round them, and a ring would be formed ; then some miner would say, “ Now, sonnies, put your papers down and fight it out. We’ll see fair-play.” Under such conditions the boys soon settled accounts ; for though might may not be right, it is a rapid and effective solver and simplifier of quarrels. I have never been in a place where there was such a spirit of liberty, kindliness, fair-play, and comradeship. We were all Uitlanders in a foreign country, and the Boers wisely gave Johannesburg a wide berth. It used to be a common joke that one might meet people of every nationality under heaven in that Boer city—except Boers.

The town sprang up with mushroom-like rapidity. There are districts in Johannesburg where I used to take a Saturday afternoon’s walk over the bare *veld*. Little by little the ground became occupied. First of all blue-gum trees were planted, and within four years the ground was crowded with houses, while stands (building sites) reached a price that would scare people in England. The town seemed a confused jumble of corrugated-iron and bricks, through which enormous



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ploughs had made deep furrows at right angles to one another so as to manufacture streets. The modern city of Johannesburg is very different from the "wood and iron" town of the early days of the Rand Goldfields.

In the early days there were no sanitary arrangements worth speaking of; and the men, who lived for the most part in an elementary type of corrugated-iron sheds, broken up into a number of stalls called rooms, simply threw their washing-water out into the street, so as at once to get rid of it and allay the dust. Had not the climate been one of the finest in the world the death-rate would have been enormous. It is not to be wondered at that typhoid and lung complaints were very rife, the one disease filling the hospital in the summer, and the other doing the same thing in the winter. Life, nevertheless, was most interesting, for fortunes were made and lost every day. As to speculation in land, it was in keeping with speculations on the Stock Exchange, which was largely held out of doors, for a portion of the street outside the Exchange was chained off so that no traffic could pass. The scene "Between the Chains" during a "boom" was a sight never to be forgotten.

What struck one most with Johannesburg was its activity and alertness which contrasted with the sleepy atmosphere that reigned everywhere else in South Africa. Everybody walked about the streets briskly; and one could not help overhearing passers-by discussing with excitement shares, or gold quartz, or land speculations, or business matters. Gold certainly was the Prince of that City.



# Gold

Things have changed much since those early days; and now as the visitor approaches the Rand by train, he sees from the carriage window, extending as far as the eye can reach, one long line of tall iron chimneys, and above the clatter of the railway carriage he can hear the busy roar of the ever-working batteries as the stamps crush the quartz containing the gold dust. The pulverised quartz, made into a thin slime with water, passes over amalgamated gold plates to which the invisible gold dust clings, and from which it is scraped later on when it has accumulated in sufficient quantity to be worth sending to the retorts in which the mercury is distilled off by heat. The quartz-slime, still containing minute quantities of gold, is then placed in the cyanide vats where the last traces of gold are recovered by electrolytic methods—the waste “tailings,” as the useless residue is called, being finally shot on to enormous rubbish heaps.

Long rows of corrugated iron rooms in which the miners live can also be seen from the train window, and it is obvious to the visitor that a great industry has reached a stable condition. What a contrast from those early days when, shaken in the swaying coach, one passed isolated prospectors scratching the ground in search of the reef!

# South Africa

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DUTCH FARM

THE South African Boer is the most hospitable of human beings. When travelling up-country there is no need to wait for an invitation to pass the night at a Boer homestead, for the traveller has but to ride or drive up to the farm and ask permission to outspan for the night. In olden days this was merely a matter of form, but things have somewhat changed within recent years. In a country where hotels are few and far between, it is to the interest of every one to be hospitable, and indeed the appearance of a visitor is a welcome relief from the tedious monotony of existence.

Dutch farms vary considerably with regard to their homesteads, those of the more wealthy being substantial square buildings, while the houses of the poorer farmers are frequently the most miserable shanties made of green brick, and are worse than many a cow-shed in England. In a land where a farm of less than 6000 acres is considered a small one, there is no need to economise the ground on which the house is built, and consequently one practically never sees a building that is two stories high. There is not even a word for "up-stairs" in the *taal*, and it is strange to listen to a Dutch sermon in which an illustration of some event in Europe is being used, and to hear the *predikant* intro-



# The Dutch Farm

duce the word "up-stairs" in the middle of his Dutch harangue.

The up-country Boer lives a very primitive life, and his home is in keeping with his simplicity. To people fresh out from Europe, the rooms look extremely bare, for there are as a rule very few pictures, unless indeed the housewife has tacked on to the wall the garish oleographs from some grocer's or tobacconist's advertisements. There are very few books lying about the room, though every home has its big family Bible and several Dutch hymn-books.

The *baas*, as the head of the family is called, reminds one forcibly of a patriarch; his word is final in everything to do with the affairs of the farm or the family, and many a time a big, bearded Boer forty years of age has told me, when I asked him if I might outspan for the night, that he would go and see what the *ou' baas*, his father had to say on the subject. Very frequently the sons, when they marry, settle down on their father's estate or else buy an adjoining farm, becoming subject to their fathers whom they consult on the smallest minutiae of life. The farmer's wife is usually a most sympathetic and kindly-hearted woman built on ample proportions, and is not only invariably the joyful mother of many big-limbed children, but is also subject to her lord even as Sarah was to Abraham of old. She is indeed a shoemaker who sticks to her last, and does not trouble her head with golf and motoring, and Votes for Women; consequently she is supremely efficient in all domestic affairs. I defy all the *chefs* of Europe, for example, to cook game or vegetables one-



## South Africa

half so well as a Dutch woman, and it is a wonder that hotel proprietors in Europe do not import some Boer women from the back *veld* to act as cooks of venison.

The visitor on arriving at the farm is invariably cross-questioned, and at first thinks that he is being put through his catechism—and not the shorter one. He is asked first of all about his name, his home, his father, his wife; having but half-satisfied the Boer's curiosity on these subjects, he is asked where he comes from, whither he is going, what business he is on, where he bought his horses, how long he had been on his journey, where he stopped last, where he is going to stop next, and so on. These questions are shot at him in the *taal*, which is the most delightful conglomeration of languages, consisting chiefly of Dutch, mixed with a few expressive words of French, English, and German. It is as if a few thousand homely words, gathered from all quarters of the globe, had been mixed indiscriminately, minced up, abbreviated, clipped, and compressed until the resulting language would puzzle what the Americans call a large-sized philologist. Yet the *taal* is most expressive, and withal so colloquial and familiar that its very use is an introduction in itself, and makes all men kin. So homely is it that a Boer *predikant* finds it impossible to pray aloud in the *taal*; for were he to use it (instead of the more formal Bible Dutch) in public prayer, he would seem extremely irreverent. One might as well try to pray in school-boy slang or in Kiplingese. It is a significant fact that all the Boers who are keenest for the maintenance of this homely tongue are of Huguenot



# The Dutch Farm

descent, have French names, and had their own original tongue suppressed in olden days by the Boers, whose descendants loudly claim special privileges for their *taal*. There is little doubt that the highly emotional South African Boer, who when courteously approached by a non-political Englishman is found to be the most kindly of men, has gained incalculably from this infusion of French blood which has given him some charming characteristics absent in the phlegmatic Hollander. The difference between these two is as great as that between the Southern Irish and the Scotch.

As soon as the visitor has finished his catechism, he is regaled with coffee which is generally made from the mild Java bean. The Dutch can do nothing without coffee, and when staying with them in out-of-the-way districts such as Gazaland, I have been offered coffee five times between sunrise and breakfast. The coffee pot, in a well regulated Dutch farmhouse, is always kept hot on a little charcoal stove.

The meals naturally consist very largely of very wholesome and pleasant home-made bread and excellently-cooked mutton, with the addition of the inimitable *konfyt*, which frequently takes the place of jam. It is a preserve of a consistency something between that of our crystalised fruits and jam. Peaches, apricots, oranges, and tangerines are preserved whole, while the rind of the water-melon is also made into the most excellent *konfyt*. In the more primitive farms, a basin of water and a towel are brought round at the close of the meal by a little Hottentot girl or boy, and all the



## South Africa

people at the table wash their hands one after another in the same water ; after this ceremonial cleansing the *ou' baas* reads family prayers. The Dutch are essentially a religious people, and, until they were infected from the English, it was extremely rare to find any irreligious or scoffing young Boer. The young men were no more ashamed of their father's Presbyterian religion than an Englishman is ashamed of his father's politics or of reading the newspaper. The centre of the Boer religion is to be found in the *nagmaal* or quarterly (or half-yearly) Communion service. Since the farms are scattered over an immense area—the major portion of the Orange Free State once formed a single parish—the Boers in olden days frequently had to travel a fortnight's journey, or longer, to attend church. It was therefore only possible to attend service once or twice a year, and consequently these Communion services became vested with all the characters of a gathering of the clans. For a week all the members of every family, dressed not so much in their best as in their stiffest clothing, would camp out in waggons in the Market Square, and would enjoy their holiday. It was at such times that sheep and produce were sold, and that the shopping for the half-year was done : thus the *nagmaal* became a religious, social, and commercial gathering or fair.

At a very early hour after the evening meal—in remote districts where lamps are rare it may be as early as seven o'clock—the visitor is shown to his bedroom. There is no telling what he may find. He may be shown a gorgeous feather-bed covered with





ON THE KAYOON. Plate 76





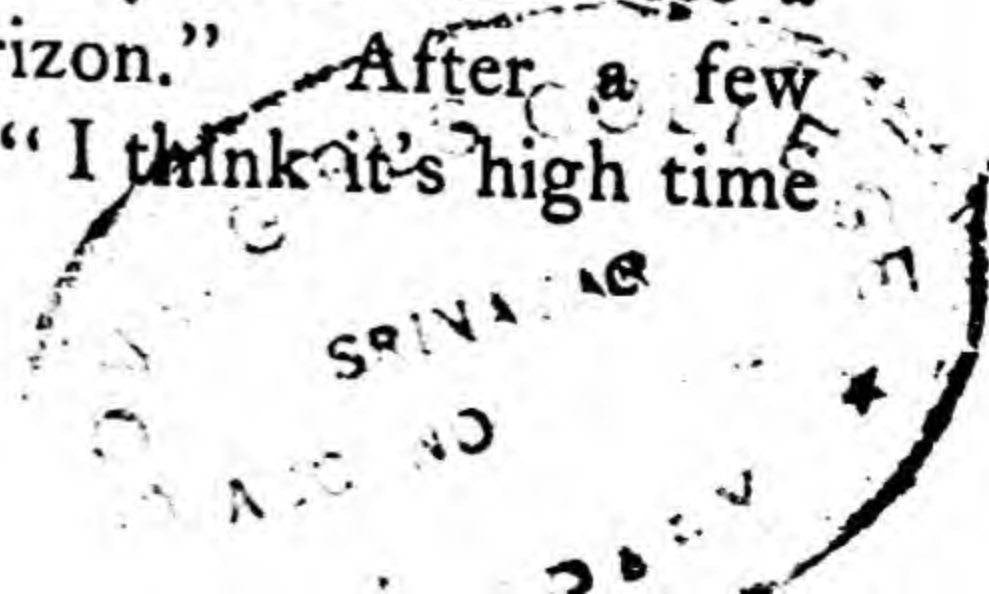
## The Dutch Farm

the most spotless and snow-white sheets ; or if the homestead is full, he may find only some straw on the floor. I shall never forget a night I spent once when travelling in the Orange Free State between Bloemfontein and Kimberley. I was travelling with a friend who was dying of consumption ; we had before us a three days' drive to the railway, and were benighted through the mistake of our driver. We arrived at a Dutch farm after dark and found ourselves in the midst of a large family gathering ; but that did not prevent the people from showing us hospitality. We were ushered into an out-house and were told we could sleep on some straw on the floor, though there was a bed in the room. As we were settling-in for the night, three big unkempt Boers came in, took off but their boots, and all got into the one bed as if nothing at all unusual were happening.

The Boers are a pastoral people and above all things love sheep farming. Their conceptions may safely be called spacious. To any Boer who happens to pay us a visit, England looks a sort of doll's-house garden, not so much overcrowded as overpacked. The Boer conception of space was very well exemplified when a farmer in the Transvaal said to Oom Paul that he thought the country was getting too densely populated. It was many years ago, and Kruger not unnaturally asked the old man why he thought the country was overcrowded. "Well," said the man, "It's like this : I can't drive an hour away from my farm but I see a house somewhere on the horizon." After a few moments' reflection he added : "I think it's high time

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25





# South Africa

I moved up North." It is such men who are the pioneers of civilisation and who win unknown lands for those who would never have had the hardihood to face the roughness and exposure of a pioneer's life.

## CHAPTER V

### THE VELD

THE *veld* has ever-varying, never-ending charm, though its beauty is rarely recognised by new comers, who are apt to think it uninteresting and monotonous. Its great charm consists in its expanse and consequent atmospheric effects. Even when most monotonous, it presents endless variety to those who have learnt to see its beauty. There is the great Karoo with its endless *koppies* and its scrubby bush a couple of feet high; there is the series of tablelands, broad and sweeping, which are covered with short grass, as in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal; there is the broken *veld* of Natal and of mountainous Basutoland; there is the low bush-country with its grass ten feet high; there is the sea-coast covered with dense forests; there is the tropical *veld* brilliant with colour and dense with mahogany and ebony, with palms and ferns, with bamboo and flowering trees.

The effect of rain in some districts is simply magical. In the districts about Wellington and Ceres, the country may look dead before the spring rains commence, but within a week of the first showers the



## The Veld

country is carpeted as far as eye can see with a mass of flowering bulbs, many of which we cultivate as rarities in our English hot-houses. I once took the trouble to count the number of varieties of flowering bulbs within a radius of ten yards, and found over fifty varieties, many of which were of the most surpassing beauty. It is not uncommon when travelling up-country to come across bulbs with huge clusters of glorious, fire-red, lily-shaped flowers ; but so common are they that they are considered of no account, though people in England would go into raptures over them. Even the Arum lily grows in such profusion in certain districts that without moving more than half a dozen paces one can gather a whole armful of flowers ; and indeed so common are they that they are contemptuously called Pig lilies.

In Natal there are the most magnificent flowering shrubs, while higher north, in Gazaland, even in mid-winter, it seems as if every other tree had burst into flower ; the whole landscape presents a riot of every conceivable colour from the most tender and brilliant spring greens up to flaming autumn scarlets ; and summer differs from winter chiefly in the fact that, owing to its being the rainy season, the summer is the cooler of the two. One might almost imagine the country to be fairyland, especially as the distance is bathed not only with the tender blues and purples of distance, but is also frequently seen shimmering through an indescribably soft opalescent pink haze. But few white men ever visit those beautiful and fever-stricken districts.

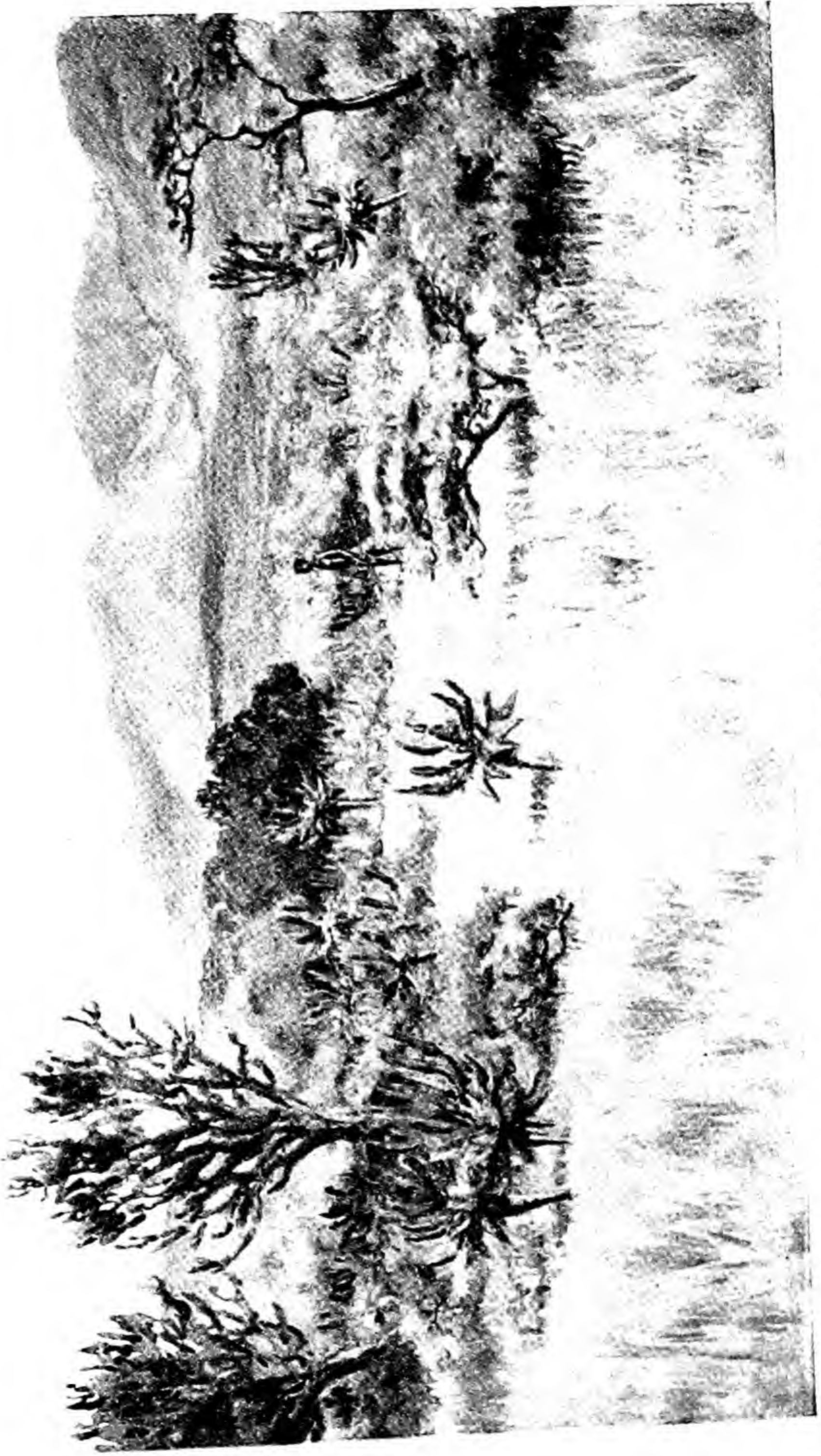


## South Africa

How shall one speak of the sunsets and of the sunrises? The peculiarity of the South African sunset is the richness of the orange tints which are set off either by the deep purples of the distance or by the lavender or dove-coloured clouds. As the sunset is dying, the oranges melt into the most lurid reds which at last get lost in the violet after-glow. If one would enjoy the sunrise it is well to sleep in the open air. The night seems immense with stars, and as one lies on one's back, tucked up in blankets, and feels the cool night air, laden with the scent of innumerable small flowers, wandering over one's face, it seems almost a crime to go to sleep. During the day the endless noises of the *veld* and the incessant murmur of the insects never cease: but as the sounds of day die down, the deep silences of the brooding night are heard. Until I slept beneath the stars in the low country I never knew how insistent such silences could be. All day long the earth had been baked in the pitiless sunshine, and at night, when all the world was quiet and asleep, the burnt earth gave out the heat it had drunk in during the day, and then the great silences of the *veld* could be heard. English novelists talk of the "velvet" sky of night—velvet, so suggestive of gloom, of heaviness and ugliness, so reminiscent of a stuffy, oppressive pall above one's head. But in this southern clime, the night "walks in beauty" beneath the transparent indigo of illimitable space, for there is no veil of fog, or of exhausted and smoke-vitiated atmosphere, between one's face and the Southern Cross which burns in the liquid depths of the sky. And









## The Veld

the dawn is not like the aged and exhausted thing in Europe that, again to quote the words of an English novelist, "Lifts tired eyelids," and looks out wearily on the gloom of another day. Here in Africa the day awakens refreshed and buoyant as with the elastic spring of youth.

In the early days the *veld* was more crowded with game than are our English paddocks with sheep or oxen. Immense herds of every description of buck roamed about the country, which, when the white man first appeared upon the scene, were delightfully tame and unsuspecting. On one occasion, when travelling in the Orange Free State, on rounding the base of a *koppie*, I came upon a herd of spring-buck feeding. I know not who was the more surprised, they or I. They were within a few yards of me, and in a moment the whole ground seemed alive with spring-buck which flew through the air in the most graceful curves. By the time I had gathered my scattered senses, I seemed lost in an eddying mass of living creatures whirling about around the heart of a cyclone. I never thought of shooting, for I was lost in amazement at the grace of form and movement of these animals that are as delicate as the daintiest gazelle. They raced off to some clumps of bush nine or ten feet high, which they cleared with the greatest imaginable ease, bounding one after another in leaps of twenty or thirty paces without apparently exerting the slightest effort. When gazing at such an incomparable sight; or at a herd of zebra galloping in the sunlight through park-like country; or at a number of ostriches majestically sailing with out-



# South Africa

spread feathers on the bosom of the wind ; or at the little meer cats sitting alarmed with bushy tails erect ; or at innumerable insects too busy at their work to pause for play ; or at a number of jabbering and scolding monkeys disturbed in their councils, and scampering and scrambling, with baby monkeys on their backs, over the rocks so as to get away from their intruding and new relation who walks erect and deals out death and destruction in all directions ; when watching such scenes, a man feels out of place, for the *veld* seems to belong by prescriptive right to the lower orders of creation that have possessed it and enjoyed it unmolested for untold ages.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOUTH AFRICAN RIVERS

MANY of the rivers in South Africa are dry for the greater part of the year, and not a few railway bridges, consisting of a dozen spans, cross trickling streams but a yard or two wide—indeed, in some districts long bridges may be seen spanning perfectly dry river-beds. A few months later, when the rainy season has commenced, the water may reach nearly up to the level of the bridge.

When I first visited Beaufort West there had been no rain in the district for three years ; the great dam was empty, and the sheep were standing piteously around many a Dutch farmhouse, making their dumb appeal for water. Some children were playing in the



## South African Rivers

dry bed of the river that skirts the village, when thunderstorms burst on the hills a few miles away. The river came down with a sudden rush, the front wave of water presenting the appearance of a wall several feet high. The noise of the on-coming water in the distance aroused the children, but before they could get out of the bed of the river the raging torrent swept them away.

When crossing the dry bed of a small rivulet in the Eastern Provinces I was told that but a month before a bullock-waggon had been crossing at the drift, when the river suddenly came down as I have just described. Half the oxen gained the further side of the drift with dry feet while the waggon and the rear oxen were carried off down stream. Thus it will readily be seen that though many of the bridges in South Africa are not needed during nine months of the year, they are very badly needed in the other three.

Travelling up country when there are thunderstorms about is exciting work, for at any moment one may be caught between two rivers and for several days may be unable either to proceed or go back. On one occasion I was travelling by the Swaziland post-cart, a very primitive affair drawn by half-a-dozen mules. All went well till about eight o'clock at night. The driver had been drinking somewhat too freely, and as he was negotiating a small drift in which the water just reached the splashboard, he mistook his way and drove the cart on to a hidden boulder in the stream. The driver became sober in a moment, the cart was brought up with a jerk, and the front four mules broke



## South Africa

their traces and galloped off in the dark. The cart was jammed into a hole, and it was found impossible to move it; so we had to spend the night in the middle of the river with the water washing the bottom of the cart. It was an anxious night, for thunderstorms were travelling all around us; but fortunately no storm broke in the country above us. Travelling was far more interesting in these old days when bridges were unknown than it is to-day, and many were the exciting adventures experienced in crossing the rivers. It was quite a common experience for a bullock-waggon to stick in mid-stream, or for one's horse to trip and plunge one into the water; or, when tramping on foot, to have to swim the rivers while holding one's clothes high out of the water.

The larger rivers, such as the Orange, invariably have a certain amount of water in them; and even up in the mountains of Basutoland whence the Orange River springs, I have found the water running very strong. On one occasion I had to swim across it not very far from its source, and was nearly swept down the river, so numbing was the cold water and so strong the current. The banks of the Orange River are in many places lined with beautiful old willows, but at other places they are very bare. Before the days of railways and bridges, the river was generally crossed by means of ponts. At one of these crossing places a house had been built to accommodate a man who had charge of the pont. A person just out from England, noticing that the house was built half a mile away from the river, wondered why the man was so stupid as to



## South African Rivers

build his house so far away from the scene of his work. The traveller repassed the spot a fortnight later, and to his astonishment found that the river had overflowed its banks, and that the water was actually lapping the walls of the house. He ceased to wonder at the "stupidity" of the colonists.

Perhaps the prettiest river in South Africa is the Umzimvubu (the St. John's river), which runs through the broken country that constitutes the heart of Pondoland. Away in the fastness of these hills there is a spot remote from civilisation, and possibly not visited by more than a dozen white men, where a magnificent vista opens to view. Far below one, the river can be seen winding for miles like a silver thread through the most beautiful country. But perhaps even that view lingers less in one's mind than the distant landscape that is spread out before one when travelling towards the coast. Far in the distance can be seen the river as it broadens out between precipitous cliffs when on its way to pass the celebrated Gates of St. Johns. The whole mouth of the St. John's River reminds one of a Norwegian Fjord turned tropical. The hills on either side of the river are densely covered with forest which runs right down to the water's edge; armadillos scurry over the rocks as one rows past them, while kingfishers and bright-hued tropical birds glance from bough to bough in the sunshine. Were it not for the bar at the mouth of the river, St. Johns would form a perfectly ideal harbour, large enough to float the British navy.

Space fails to tell of the Kei, the Bashee, the Umtata, the Tugela, the Limpopo, the Crocodile, and a dozen



## South Africa

other rivers, each of which presents peculiar features ; nor is it possible to describe the rivulets in Zululand that empty themselves into Lake St. Lucia which is bright with innumerable flamingoes that float on its bosom, and vile with the crocodiles that infest its banks. But the Zambesi, the king of South African rivers, must have its few words. The river at its mouth forms a typical Delta, each stream of which runs in a channel cut through a mangrove swamp. The main entrance to the Zambesi is at Chinde, the most forsaken spot in South Africa, though Beira and Inhambane run it close in this respect. It must have been at Chinde that the Walrus and the Carpenter "wept like anything to see such quantities of sand." Like all Portuguese ports in South-East Africa, it is a hot-bed of malaria, and the traveller gives a sigh of relief when the stern-wheel steamer, drawing but eighteen inches of water, carries him away up the river. The Zambesi is in most parts immensely wide, and is full of shoals and sandbanks which are ever shifting, and which may split the river into three or four distinct streams. During the rainy season these little islands in the river are frequently submerged, and so form ideal spots for growing rice on in the summer, and for crocodiles to sun themselves on in the winter. Frequently a dozen crocodiles can be seen sleeping side by side in the sunshine, though they slip into the water when the noise of the steamer, or the bullet from a rifle, awakens them. They are the most loathsome of animals and every one seems to feel it his duty to "pot a croc" whenever he gets a chance. It is easy work to do this from the deck



## South African Rivers

of a river steamer, but it is a different, and a more exciting thing, to hunt the brutes when one is in a fragile canoe which topples over for every half excuse it gets ; or to stalk the animals in their favourite haunts in the dense bush at the edges of the pools of some narrow river. It is surprising how difficult it is to see a crocodile at first, and many a man has been on the point of stepping on to a crocodile under the impression that he was about to place his foot on a rock. When I first saw a crocodile sleeping on the edge of a pool about seventy yards distant, I was certain that the object was a mere rock, though the natives whispered in an excited fashion, urging me to shoot at once before the animal took the alarm. I put up my rifle and sent an expanding bullet into the centre of what I regarded as a grey boulder ; but lo ! the rock moved and hurriedly plunged into the water which it lashed with its tail into a number of angry whirlpools, covering the surface with a pink froth of diluted blood. After realising how easily one might place oneself at the mercy of a crocodile, it seems simple work to shoot the animal from the deck of a steamer.

It is pleasant to lie in a canvas chair under the double awning that covers-in the deck of the river-steamer and to watch the ever-shifting scene that glides past one ; or to doze in the fierce noonday heat ; or to scan the distant water for the signs of some shy hippopotamus ; or to watch the captain bargaining with natives on the bank, who would fain sell goats, or ducks, or very questionable eggs.

In parts the river is extremely pretty, for it is often



## South Africa

fringed by palm trees, or edged by native villages strewn along its banks. The dug-out canoes with their chocolate-skinned paddlers somehow or other seem entirely in place, and present a picturesque appearance. And pleasant indeed is it to watch the sunsets on the Zambesi, for they are beautiful beyond all telling. The sun sinks like a red-hot ball into a bank of tender haze, its reflection in the oily, slow-swirling water presenting an ever-changing appearance. When the sun sinks from view, a gentle breeze creeps down the river, as if longing for the sea ; and the stifling heat of the day gives place to the delicious cool of the evening. The steamer is tied up to the bank for the night ; and the passengers, clad only in trousers and flannel shirt, stretch their legs ashore, or else lie on deck with bare arms and with shirt open over the chest, and dream of coming bliss. But before the swift-coming night falls like a curtain on the river, the mosquitoes in countless myriads fill the air and become a burning torment. So close on the Zambesi is paradise to purgatory.

## CHAPTER VII

### AN EASTERN PROVINCE VILLAGE

THE Western Provinces of Cape Colony are occupied mainly by the Dutch, while the Eastern Provinces are chiefly colonised by the English. The atmosphere of these two districts is entirely different, and it is sometimes difficult to believe that they are both in the same





A ZULU WOMAN. Her hair is dressed with red clay. Page 42





## An Eastern Province Village

Colony. The Western districts contain practically no raw natives, but are broken up into enormous farms ; and in most parts one can travel for scores of miles without seeing anything taller than the scrubby karoo bush on which the sheep fatten, except here and there a few trees around some homestead. But the Eastern Provinces are crowded with natives and are much more like England, reminding one in parts of our South Downs : the country is dotted here and there with small English villages, few and far between, which in many cases have sprung up on the sites of long-since disused forts.

In the days of the Border Wars, when civilisation was spreading from Port Elizabeth and East London up towards Natal, the few white inhabitants were largely at the mercy of enormous hordes of natives ; and there are people still living who went through the most terrible and harrowing of experiences when the outposts of civilisation were being pushed as a wedge into districts where savagery prevailed. To the pioneers, life was little else than an incessant succession of cattle-thefts and massacres at the hands of the natives. On one memorable occasion, for example, the farmers were celebrating Christmas, when a number of natives paid them a visit : the white men invited the natives to share their feast ; and in the very act of showing hospitality to the Kafirs, they were treacherously massacred almost to a man. It was a most interesting experience to travel through the country some forty years ago with people who had been through such scenes, and to hear detailed accounts of how this house



## South Africa

or that had been fortified and held by a mere handful of white men (with very inferior weapons to those used to-day), though attacked by a hundred times the number of natives. Men had to watch night and day behind the barricades, rifle in hand, while their wives alternately cooked food and helped to manufacture ammunition. The tales of heroism that could have been recorded would fill many volumes.

In such times a fort would become the seed or germ of a little village. First there would appear the hotel or canteen which acted as general store, informal club, and boarding house : then as the district began to fill up with white men, a few more shops and boarding-houses would spring up, and possibly a church would be built so as to meet the needs of a large district. Life was a very precarious thing in those days : farmers would find their cattle raided by the natives, or else some out-lying white people in lonely farms would be massacred ; then all the white men in the district would have to stop their work, and would, at their own expense, commence operations against the natives. Those were stirring times, for the pioneers carried their very lives in their hands, though they were sometimes villified by unsympathetic and doctrinaire officials sent out from England—as any one who cares to take the trouble of reading Theal's History of South Africa may see.

Many of these villages have now grown into active centres of trade ; and Europeans and Kafirs are living side by side in peace and prosperity. Life in these villages nowadays is uneventful and monotonous, for



## An Eastern Province Village

society is very restricted ; and in these, as in all small and isolated communities, petty quarrels are apt to arise. To-day there are the magistrate, the Anglican clergyman, the Wesleyan minister, the doctor, the post-master, the storekeepers, some clerks, the hotel proprietor, the blacksmith, and a few others : these people often come from many different social strata, and yet have to live together as best they may, everybody knowing all about the affairs of everybody else. In short, it may be said that life in the smaller outlying villages has all the limiting characteristics of village life in other countries.

It is, however, a healthy existence, and every young man is remarkably efficient in riding and shooting, frequently surpassing home-born youth in these pursuits. Sunday morning naturally affords a famous opportunity for hunting, and the churches are usually rather empty in the morning, though they fill up well in the evening, for nearly everyone goes to church at night.

The opening up of the country districts with railways has brought about many changes in recent years. In the early days the great event that broke the monotony of life, and linked the little community with the distant world, was the arrival of the post-cart. In some districts there was but one post a week, and in such cases the bugle-call of the post-cart brought out an interested group of men who were anxious to see what fresh arrivals there might be, or what news the post might bring.

Many of the villages in the Eastern districts present a quaint appearance. Viewed from the distant hills the



## South Africa

village, with its trees and gardens, affords a pleasant relief from the barrenness of the *veld*, for every house has its garden. The roofs of most houses are made of corrugated-iron, for slate is unprocurable. At first this offends the eye of the traveller, but in time he becomes accustomed to it, as one does to almost everything that is inevitable. Nobody in the village seems to be in any hurry, and the customer as he walks into the shop is treated quite as a friend, and his visit is almost a social function. The broad, dusty roads are usually very empty, save for bullock-waggons and, perhaps, a few blanketed natives who have come in to shop, or to barter produce, as well as see the home of the white man. A Kafir very rarely shows any sign of surprise or astonishment when at first he sees houses that appear to him portentously large. He maintains a stolid face, as though he had been familiar with English villages all his life ; and it is not until he gets back to his kraal, perhaps fifty miles away, that he expresses his real sentiments. Then for days, if not for weeks, he will talk to his fellows about the strange white men he has seen, and about their inconsequent and funny ways.

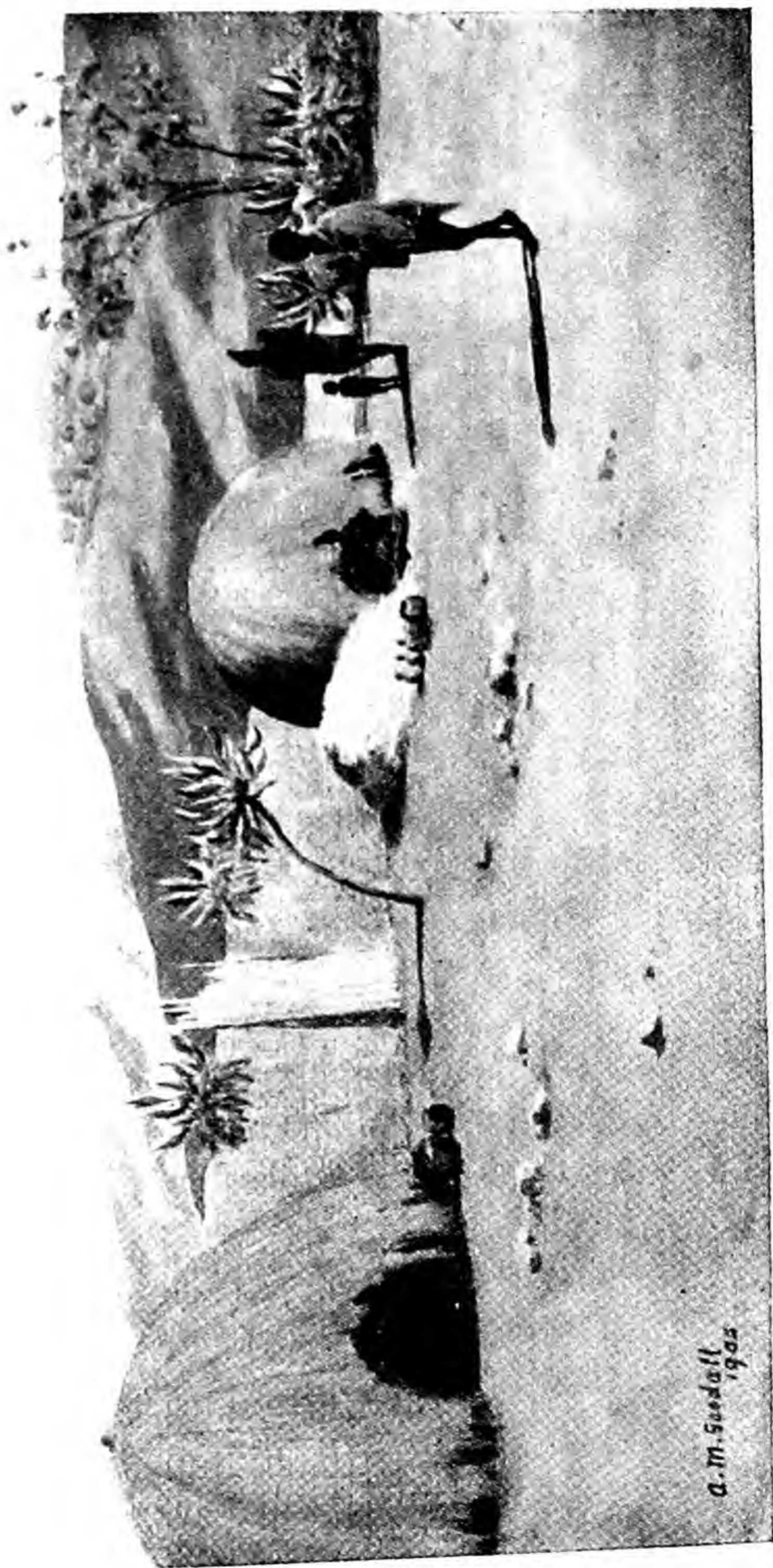
## CHAPTER VIII

### THE KAFIR KRAAL

If we are to judge by population, South Africa is a black man's country, and must remain so for many a







a. m. Goodall  
1905

A KRAAL



## The Kafir Kraal

day to come. It is difficult to realise that all the white people in Africa south of the Zambesi—a region about the size of Europe with Russia left out—could be placed in Manchester and Liverpool. The natives in British and Portuguese territory outnumber the whites by nearly ten to one, and are increasing more rapidly than the white races are even with immigration. The Kafir therefore has to be reckoned with and should be carefully studied.

The outward life of the average Kafir is primitive and simple in the extreme. The natives live in round huts, which are built of wattle and daub. A kraal consists of a number of these huts grouped in a circle or crescent; the cattle-kraal, which is usually a large circular enclosure made of thorn-bush branches, being placed in the centre of the circle, or else on the cord of the crescent or horseshoe. The huts have a low doorway, against which a basket-work hurdle is placed at night. Windows and chimneys are unknown. In some tribes, for instance among the Zulus, a kraal looks exactly like a number of Brobdignagian bee-hives; while amongst other tribes, such as the Pondos, it looks like a fairy ring of gigantic mushrooms with hypertrophied stalks, for the walls rise about five feet before they meet the roof.

The furniture is of the rudest and most elementary kind; a few earthenware pots, a basket or two to hold grain, some grass sleeping-mats, a number of wooden pillows, and a Kafir pot bought at the nearest trader's store, suffice to meet most of the needs of the natives. In the centre of the floor there is a circular depression,



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surrounded by a small ring of earth, which acts as a fire-place; a wood fire is kept burning day and night, and the pungent smoke wanders about the hut and escapes through the thick thatched roof as best it may. The atmosphere of a kraal thus has a peculiar smell which is very dear to the heart of a Kafir; the odour is to him what the "murmurs and scents of the infinite sea" are to the sailor. It is the ever-present and beloved background to the quiet, placid life of the Kafir.

The chocolate-coloured natives are semi-nude. The men wear either the *umutsha*, which is a loin-covering made from the tails of wild animals, or else blankets which are often smeared with red clay. The tribes who use this Kafir rouge are called "Red Kafirs," or simply "Reds." The body is generally smeared with oil, which very much improves the colour of the skin, though the Red Kafirs rub the rouge over their body as well as over their blankets. Various articles of European clothing can now be met with everywhere amongst the natives: it is not unusual nowadays to find a Kafir clad simply in a very dirty, shabby cotton shirt, or in an old pair of second-hand trousers patched beyond all recognition of its first estate. The bright colour of old, discarded soldiers' tunics is often the occasion of much covetousness, and no one seems to think it incongruous to wear such a flaming jacket in addition to his barbaric *umutsha*. A native may be clad in anything from an odd boot up to a silk hat, and may choose an assortment of the most incongruous old European garments, for nothing is ever too bizarre for him: a swallow-tail coat over pyjamas



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would form an admirable combination, and would make the man as proud as a peacock.

The small children wander about the kraal stark naked, or else annex a small bit of an old blanket which the parents have discarded. The boys frequently have a small *umutsha* made from three or four thin strips of ox-hide.

The women wear leather petticoats rendered beautifully soft by fraying, or else make kilts from blankets, the upper part of the body being covered or not, according to the taste of the individual woman or of the clan. On great occasions, such as dances or weddings, the people discard most of their clothing and deck themselves in very pretty beadwork. They are then "dressed" according to their ideas, though from our point of view the word seems very inadequate to describe their appearance.

The Kafirs live chiefly on porridge made from Indian corn or mealies as it is called in South Africa. The grain is ground on rough stones by the women, and is cooked in the iron Kafir pots, though before the advent of civilisation the people used native pottery for the purpose. Kafir beer is almost as much a food as a drink, for it consists of a thin sort of gruel made from Kafir corn which is a pretty russet-brown grain about the size of millet seed. A prodigious quantity of this beer can be drunk without causing any serious intoxication, and as soon as the crop of Kafir corn is reaped there are incessant beer-drinks all over the country. The natives are most hospitable, and welcome all comers to their beer-drinks; they are also most



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improvident, for they waste an immense amount of grain, and consequently feel the pinch of hunger before the next season's crop is ready for reaping.

Every Kafir is inordinately fond of meat, and especially of beef. It costs the men many a pang to kill any of their beloved cattle, for a Kafir would almost as soon feast his eyes by looking at his oxen as fill his capacious stomach with beef. He has not the slightest qualm when eating oxen belonging to other people; and he invariably devours his own beasts when they die of disease. He naïvely remarks, in the latter case, that it is a very convenient way of burying the dead oxen. The main occasions on which the cattle are killed are the Ancestral Meat Feasts, which the diviners say are necessary for the retaining of the favour of the *amatongo*, or spirits of their dead forefathers. These spirits are most conveniently supposed to be quite satisfied with smelling the meat, or with drinking the serum that oozes from the beef while it is kept all night in a special portion of the hut which the Ancestral Spirits are supposed to frequent. When the dead members of the clan have partaken of their share of the spiritual elements of the beef, the living members most wisely make merry as they feast on the more solid portions. It is a most convenient and sensible arrangement.

Food is eaten out of the hand or else from wooden spoons. The men, sitting by themselves, are served with food first; when they have finished, the women and children fall to, usually consuming all the food that is left over. However, the children have special



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food cooked for them at different hours of the day and may truly be said to live on the fat of the land, for the people are very fond of, and kind to, their children.

The Kafir subsists chiefly by agriculture and pastoral pursuits, most of the gardening being done by the women who scratch the surface of the ground with hoes which are bought from the traders, though in olden days hoes were made by the tribal blacksmiths. The men are beginning to take a greater interest in agriculture, and the plough is finding its way even into the districts that are most remote from civilisation. The men see to all the rough, hard work such as fighting, hunting, the care of the oxen, and the building of the main structure of the hut; the women plastering and thatching the huts when the men's work is finished. The boys take charge of the herding of the cattle, and act under the orders and oversight of the men, for the women are not allowed to have anything to do with either the cattle or the milk.

The people are courteous, genial, and kindly; they are usually very placid and good-natured, though when once a certain critical point has been passed, they forget their customary self-restraint and become inordinately excited. They combine a remarkable shrewdness in certain directions with a striking lack of balance in others, being not unlike that eternal savage—the English schoolboy. The old men are sententious and wise, and are greatly respected by the younger people. The women have but a very low status, their wishes being regarded as wholly subservient to the interest of the men and of the clan.



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Their business is but to bear children, grow the food, attend to domestic matters—which they do extremely well—and to hold their tongues, which they do very badly. They have no voice in affairs except in peculiar circumstances, as for example when a woman occasionally acts as Regent while the young chief is a minor. Thus the old Swazie Queen, who ruled the nation during the minority of the late King Bunu, was a sort of black Catherine de Medici.

The natives live for the most part far from civilisation, which is known to them mainly through the gold mine, the missionary, the trader, and the magistrate. In Natal, however, the natives are in very close contact with white men, and many a native kraal is built close to the railway, and, indeed, in sight of passing trains. Thus there comes about a strange jumble of the old world and the new ; and the Kafir, who is without any criteria for viewing things in their true proportion, will often say that he regards a sixpenny Jack-in-the-Box as a much more wonderful and cunning thing than a locomotive engine.

## CHAPTER IX

### BLACK CHILDREN

BLACK children are the merriest little creatures alive and everybody has a good word to say for them. They seem to spend their lives laughing, and evidently find the world a most delightful place. They are very



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respectful to their parents and to their betters, a habit that is probably strengthened by the ancestral worship which forms the basis of Kafir religion. The children have none of the toys that are to be found in every English nursery; as compensation for this loss, they seem to find a double pleasure in the playthings they make for themselves. There are very few nagging restrictions placed upon them, for in the absence of European clothing—and old maids—they cannot be worried by acidulous maiden aunts about soiling bibs or getting boots and stockings wet. They are left very largely to themselves, though they keep company mainly with the women until they get their second teeth; then the boys form a society of their own. There can be little doubt about the fact that black children have a very good time.

With regard to toys, the children make dolls and animals out of clay and mealie-cobs. The clay has to be well pounded so that it may be in good condition, and then the children set to work and fashion it into the most comical looking oxen with stumpy, sprawling legs, and with horns half the size of the body. These clay oxen are dried in the sun and occasionally hardened by heat. The children also make horses, sheep, dogs, and human beings, the boys scorning to make girl-dolls and keeping a bright look-out lest the girls should surreptitiously make boy-dolls. A clay sheep differs very slightly from a clay goat, yet it is surprising how the slight difference clearly indicates which animal is meant.

When the children have made a number of dishes and cooking pots about as large as those used by



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children in England when playing with their dolls, the boys set to work and make a doll's house. Since everything has to be made in perfect imitation of real life, the doll's-house is not only made like one of the beehive huts the people live in, but is also made with the same materials—namely sticks and mud. When the boys have finished their part of the work, like their elders they leave the thatching to the girls. Then the children begin to play at weddings, or beer-drinks, or parties. They are very fond of marrying a boy-doll to a number of girl-dolls, and insist on giving the correct number of clay oxen as *lobola* (dowry) to the imaginary fathers of the girl-dolls. Every detail of the wedding ceremony is imitated, until finally the wives are led off in triumph to the hut of the doll-polygamist.

Bathing is a great institution with the children, who may spend all the morning down at the river playing games in between the periods of actual bathing. Most of the simple games played in Europe are known to black children; they have themselves invented Follow my Leader, Touch, Cock-shies, Hide and Seek, Wolf, King-of-the-Castle, as well as a number of elementary games that can be played with stones or mealie-grains. The children run races, play at Horses, have contests of balancing, turn Catherine-Wheels, play at Cat's-Cradle, and are fond of a game very much like our hockey. They have also a number of much more complicated games than these, which would take too long to describe. The big boys frequently make the most clever labyrinths in the sand with their fingers: the chief is supposed to live in the centre of the maze, and



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the children have to find their way in, following the tortuous lines in the sand.

It is but natural that the boys should become very skilful in making bird traps as well as in setting nooses for rats, rabbits, and many of the small animals that abound. The bird traps are frequently made by propping up a heavy stone, and act on the same principle as the brick traps of English boys. Another favourite type consists of little cone-shaped cages made of stout reeds, a small opening being made on one side near the ground : in this hole is inserted a slip-knot made from the hair of a cow's tail. The bird can easily put its head through the noose so as to get at the bait inside the cage, but the moment it withdraws its head, the slip-knot tightens round its neck. Traps for the larger animals are made either by suspending the trunk of a small tree over a gap in the hedge, the weight being released when the animal touches the trigger ; or by bending a stick which acts as a strong spring. A little piece of cord is fastened on to the end of the stick and is made into a slip-knot ; the moment the animal puts its head through the noose, the bent stick is released and carries the animal up in the air.

So much for the play of the children ; their work consists mainly in scaring the birds away from the ripening crops, or, when they grow older, in herding the goats and oxen. But their "work" is penetrated with play and with fun, for the people do not mind how much the children amuse themselves so long as they get their work done. When the crops are ripening, the men build small hut-like erections, called *pempes*, at



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the edges of the fields or on some suitable elevated spot ; and in these flimsy huts the small boys and girls spend the day, shouting at the birds that would fain devour the grain. When the children are watching the crops thus, they are allowed to take as much food as they please from the gardens : they have great fun at such times for they get up to all sorts of pranks and mischief. They generally select a boy to act as the chief for the day, and regard this lad's word as final in all disputes.

The bigger boys do not mind herding the cattle during the fine weather, but they dislike it exceedingly when it is cold or rainy. So long as the boys keep the cattle out of the gardens and away from the bogs, they are allowed to do what they like. Consequently, they ride races on the backs of the calves, have glorious fights, toboggan down the banks of the rivers (sitting on stiff pieces of ox-hide or else rolled up in old blankets), and generally amuse themselves in a thousand ways as only boys can. The one quality they all covet is bravery ; the one name they all detest is coward. The men believe that when the boys have reached the age of fourteen they should be hardened ; consequently the boys are given no food at mid-day while they are herding the cattle. The parents very rarely thrash their sons, but when they do so they do it with magnificent vigour, and the boys have to take it in perfect silence unless they want an extra thrashing for being cowardly.

When the children are quite small, they sleep with their mother, lying on a little grass mat by her side



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under cover of her blanket. When the boys lose their first teeth, they leave the society of their mothers and sleep, sometimes together with four or five other boys, under their father's blanket. At a later period, the young men club together and sleep in a hut of their own, the big girls sometimes adopting a similar practice.

The parents have endless ways of making good-humoured fun of their children. Thus when the grown-up people are about to eat some delicacy which is insufficient to go round the group, they tell the children to run off into the *veld* and call a fabulous monster named *Nomgogwana*, saying that the food will never be cooked until this person arrives. If the children should come back before the food is cooked, they are told to go away much farther and call the monster, unless indeed they wish him to devour them when he comes and finds the food all eaten. They also tell the children who cry at night that a little dwarf named *Tickoloshi* will catch them unless they are quiet; but it is surprising what very little trouble black children give their parents, and how much quieter they are than white babies.

The mothers sing their babes to sleep with lullabies, tell the little children stories about their fingers and toes, and behave in a dozen different ways just as English mothers do. Fairy tales are a never-ending source of pleasure, but black people very much dislike telling them during the day. These tales are very simple, and rather devoid of plot; but they are admirably suited to the minds of the children, who love them every bit



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as much as white children love their Hans Andersen or Grimm.

### CHAPTER X

#### A DAY IN THE KRAAL

AT the first streak of dawn there is a movement amongst the sleepers who are lying on the ground of the hut, wrapped up in their blankets. An old man is generally the first to rise. He removes the basket-work door, placing it against the side of the hut, and thus lets in the light of day. Bending down on hands and knees, he crawls through the low doorway, escapes in the outer air, and draws his blanket close round his body. The hens roosting at the back of the hut are disturbed by the man's movements and begin to complain in a querulous tone ; an old cock flies off his perch and creates a whirlwind of dust as he alights with flapping wings amongst the ashes of the previous day's fire. In a moment the dogs are all astir, and then a dozen sleepy voices shout out a number of discordant and incompatible orders, apparently addressed to the universe in general, though probably intended for a dog or a hen, or it may be for a calf that has been tied up over-night in a corner of the hut.

One advantage of a primitive life is that people are not bothered with dressing or with "doing" the bedroom. All that has to be done is to throw the sleeping blanket over the shoulder and roll up the grass mat



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which has served as a bed. The women, however, have their domestic work to see to ; for since there are no water-works, the day's supply has to be fetched from the nearest spring or stream. While the men are filling their lungs with the fresh morning air, the women set out in single file, carrying water-pots on their heads and gossiping volubly as they walk. A few women search for fire-wood for 'the day's use, while the children scamper off either to visit their doll's-house or to set bird-traps, unless, indeed, they prefer to sit in the hut and watch the cooking of the morning meal.

In most tribes there is but little cooking done in the early morning, for the people are content to finish the food left over from the previous night ; but when food is getting scarce—a thing that can easily be told by looking at the dogs, which grow abnormally gaunt in times of famine—there is very rarely any food left over from the previous meal ; and so a little mealie porridge or "pap," as it is generally called by white men, has to be cooked. The fire is never allowed to go out, and a few embers are certain to be found glowing beneath the ashes in the fireplace. The sparks are quickly blown up, and the Kafir pot, three-quarters full of water, is put on to boil. When the water is ready some mealie meal, which one of the women has freshly ground on rough stones, is sprinkled into the boiling water : the whole is stirred with a stick for a few moments, and the lid is put on the pot just a trifle askew, so as to allow the steam to escape. The pot is not touched again until the food is thought to be cooked. Beneath



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the boiling mass a thin crust of porridge becomes burnt and imparts a delicate and distinctly agreeable flavour to the food; were the porridge stirred, the burnt flavour would be far too strong. When the mealie pap has been allowed to cool, the people gather round the pot, and help themselves turn-about with a wooden spoon or with their fingers, which they manage to keep wonderfully clean. When the porridge is finished, the burnt crust, which is regarded as a very delicate sort of dessert, is shared amongst the people.

Breakfast over, the men go and look at the oxen in the cattle-kraal, and sit chatting about them, usually choosing a sunny place in the cold weather, and a shady spot in summer-time. The women are not supposed to approach the cattle-kraal, and so there is a spot—a sort of smoking-room—under the lee of the cattle-kraal, where the men can sit in *deshabille*, certain that none of the women will intrude on their privacy. The boys look forward with great interest to the day when they will be allowed to sit down at this spot and listen to the men talking.

The oxen, as a rule, are not allowed out of the cattle-kraal until the dew is off the grass; then the poles that form the gate of the enclosure are taken away and the animals are led off to pasturage by two or three of the big boys. The people have no trains to catch; and for an hour or two the men may sit gossiping about the veriest trifles, while one man leisurely carves a stick, or another hollows out a milk-pail from a log of wood; or while a dandy makes wire bangles, or, anxious to impress the maidens, gets a friend to twist or plait his



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hair into ornamental strands which are bound round with pieces of grass. When the young men have finished their toilet they saunter off to visit their sweet-hearts, and the older men go off to pay visits, though sometimes they ride on horse-back, either using an old dilapidated saddle bought second-hand a quarter of a century ago at a trader's store, or sitting bare-back. The natives were very astonished when they first saw a white man riding a horse, and declared the man was flying : since the horse carried the man on its back as a black woman carries her baby, the Kafirs called the horse "the mother of white men." Nowadays the Kafirs ride a good deal, generally placing the stirrup between the big toe and the next, and travelling the most merciless distances—sometimes fifty miles or more—without giving the horse a rest. The Basutos in the mountains breed the most excellent ponies, which can be safely trusted to canter down-hill over rocky ground; but the people very rarely sell the best animals to white men, the ponies ordinarily called "Basutos" being very poor specimens of horseflesh compared with the genuine article to be found now only in the fastness of the mountains. Never have I ridden such a pony as that once lent me by a Basuto chief, whose kraal was so remote that it had only been visited by two or three white men. It was a revelation to me as to what horseflesh could be, and the chief most wisely refused to sell the animal at any price.

After the mid-day meal the women set to work to hoe their gardens while the men saunter off to visit the nearest trader's store. They sit down in the shade of

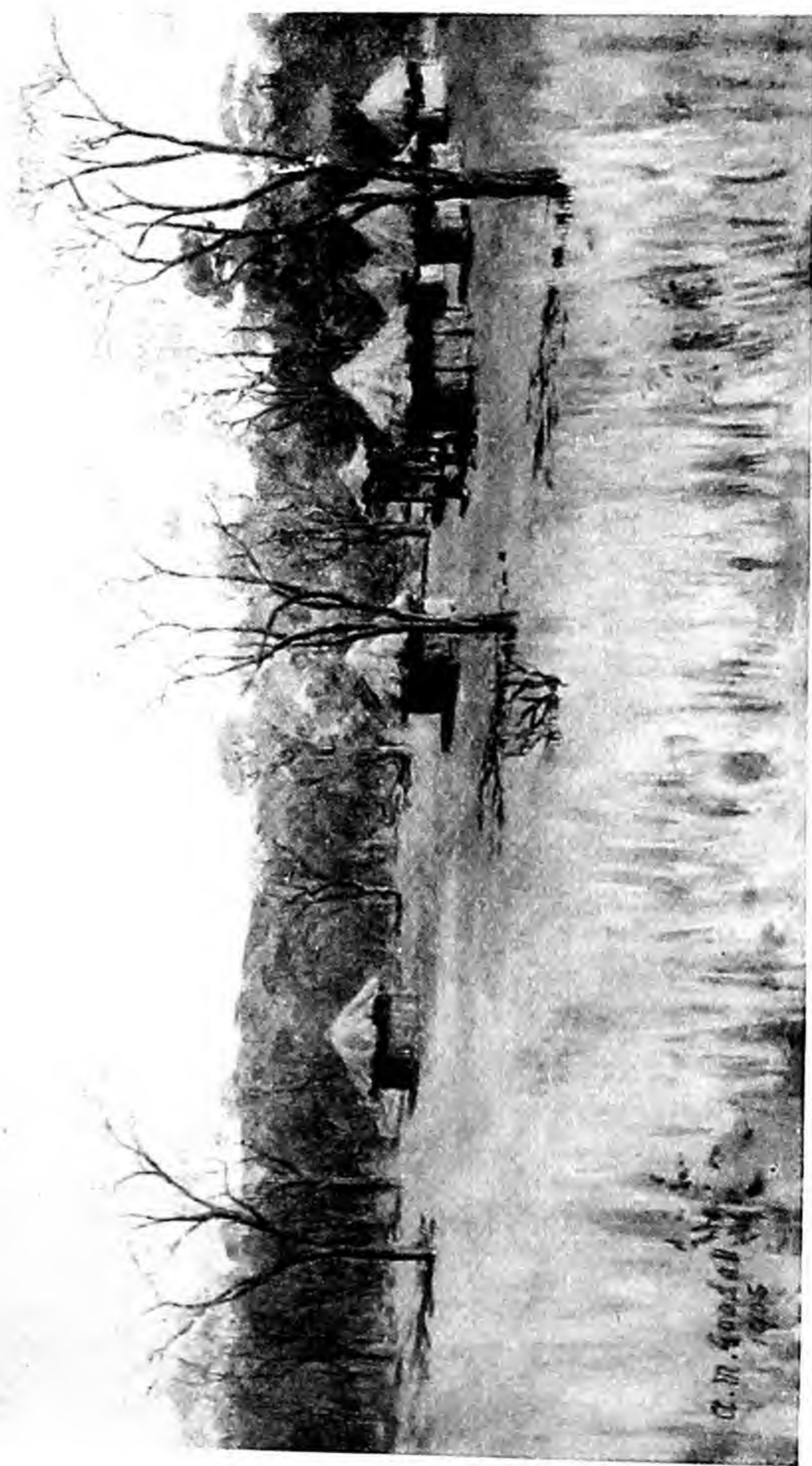


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the verandah, and listen to the news from natives who have come from different parts of the district. The news consists of small talk about a cow that has hurt one of its horns, or about an ox that has stuck for an hour or two in a mud-hole. To the Kafirs such things are of more interest than Education Bills or Old-Age Pension Schemes, for old men are remarkably well off amongst the Kafirs, and are treated with prodigious respect, being fed on the fat of the land. After chatting about the oxen for an hour or two, a movement is made to the inside of the store. The men wander about the shop feasting their eyes on the articles exposed for sale, and worry the store-keeper to bring down a dozen bundles of blankets, so they may have the pleasure of feeling the texture of the stuff with their fingers, and of gauging its quality. They ask how much this or that blanket "eats," and grunt with satisfaction or disapproval, as the case may be, at the price. But they have not the slightest intention of buying anything, and as soon as they are tired of looking at blankets, they ask for some other goods to be brought out for inspection. At first this sort of thing is very trying to the temper of the trader, but in time he takes it in a most good-natured and philosophical manner that very few of his hostile critics could equal. He learns by experience that things must be looked at from the point of view of the Kafir, and it would be a splendid thing if politicians and philanthropists would but take a page out of the trader's book.

Should there by chance be a customer who really wants to buy something, everybody in the shop will





KAFIR HUTS

A. M. Goodall  
1905





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come along and watch the bargain, giving copious advice, and insisting on feeling the quality of the goods bought. When, after infinite haggling and changes of mind, the transaction is supposed to be finished—apparently to everybody's satisfaction—the customer hunts for his money, and either finds he has forgotten to bring it or sets to work to untie several knots with which he has secured it in some corner of his dress. Should he be lucky enough to find it, he presents it to the trader, who counts out the change. While this is going on, a new comer feels the blanket and expresses a doubt about the bargain; then the haggling commences once more, and all the blankets have to be brought down again, and the whole tedious process repeated till finally the man accepts his change. At last everything is finished. But no! the man wants a packet of needles and thread to be thrown in as a present. When he has received them, some friend suggests that one of the half-crowns the trader has given the man amongst the change is a "Scotsman"—which is the name given to the two-shilling piece in Swaziland, where a canny Scot once palmed off two-shilling bits for half-crowns on the unsuspecting natives in early days. A tremendous argument arises between a dozen Kafirs, and the half-crown is passed round amongst the audience, who finally come to the conclusion that the trader is right and has not been cheating. Everybody is leaving the store laughing and contented when the native who helped the purchaser to change his mind about the blanket suddenly remembers that his wife wants some salt. He clamours in a loud voice as he points out to the trader



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that the least he could do in gratitude for the valuable services rendered is to give him a handful of salt for his wife. The whole episode is reminiscent of one of those tedious sermons in which the heading "lastly" comes in the middle of a prosy discourse, to be followed by "finally" while a quarter of the sermon is yet held in reserve, and which in turn leads on to "in conclusion" that prematurely raises false hopes five minutes before the end.

When the men get home they have their evening meal and sit round the fire. Then all the people feel the new blanket, and once more discuss the wretched half-crown, which is examined by everybody in the hut—being held this way and that, being bitten between the teeth, and being thrown on to the floor to see whether it rings true. At last the half-crown and the people go to rest, the men feeling they have had quite an exciting day, and remarking how times are changing from the quiet, placid, and uneventful days of old.

## CHAPTER XI

### KAFIR SPORT

THE Kafir is a sportsman from his childhood. No sooner can he toddle but he runs off with his bigger brothers to watch them setting bird traps, and it is not long before he learns to make them for himself. In addition to making the traps described in a previous chapter, the small boys are very fond of catching rats in



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traps baited with melon-seed. When the animals are caught, they are cooked with all their fur on and without any cleaning, for the children like to conserve all the flavour possible. As the boys grow older they learn to make traps for bigger game, and amongst these must be mentioned the game-pit. A long artificial hedge is built, extending perhaps a mile or so, and at its centre a funnel-shaped gap is made. At the mouth of the funnel a deep pit is dug and carefully covered over with thin pieces of stick, on which dried leaves and a little earth are strewn. The game are driven up to the fence, along which they run. They naturally try to escape through the first hole in the hedge they can find, only to fall in numbers into the hidden pit. When men wish to catch such animals as the hippopotamus or the elephant, they prepare similar but larger pits, placing a sharp stake in the bottom. When the enormous animal is impaled at the bottom of the deep hole, it is easily killed, for it has no room in which to struggle.

However, the men adopt much more sporting methods than these. I was once travelling in Swaziland across a bleak and mountainous region very sparsely inhabited, when my two native carriers spied a buck a mile away across the valley. Without saying a word they put down their loads, took up their sticks, and flew like the wind over the most broken ground. It seemed incredible that two men could, under such conditions, catch the fleet quarry, which soon scented the danger and galloped up a rocky hill. Never before or since have I seen men run in such superb style.



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The buck led them a tremendous dance, but the men separated, one of them managing to head off the animal so as to turn it back towards his fellow. The Kafirs must have run fully three miles by this time, tearing up and down hill as though they were running a hundred yards' race. The whole chase was spread out before me, and I was kept spell-bound as I saw the buck doubling, turning, and iumping over the rocks for its life, the men following hard on its heels. Little by little they gained on it, and when they were about twenty yards distant one of them threw his knobkerrie and hit the animal on the leg. Like a flash of light the two men gave a final spurt, and the chase ended as suddenly as it began. In a quarter of an hour we resumed our journey, one of the natives having tied the dead buck on to the top of one of my loads. Had the men even possessed a couple of dogs I should at first have thought pursuit hopeless, but when they returned victorious they did not seem to think that they had done anything peculiar. Yet recently I saw it stated in the Home Press that the Kafirs could not run, and the ingenious writer went on to invent from his imagination elaborate reasons for the strange phenomenon.

Though private hunting is fairly common, tribal hunts are the great affairs. I came across one of these on a certain occasion when I was riding through Zululand. I was in the saddle before daybreak, but it was not till an hour before sunset that I could see the end of my journey, some ten miles distant. The road at this point took a turn through some bush country, and



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before I had penetrated far into the bush, I heard a confused noise as of hundreds of people shouting. Wondering what all the excitement was about, I put my horse into a canter and, before long, found myself at the edge of an enormous ring of natives armed with assegais and kerries. I should think there must have been about five hundred natives surrounding an open patch of ground, which contained a few thorn bushes scattered about here and there. The men were in little clumps about half a dozen yards apart from one another, and in the centre of this circle there were hundreds of buck, consisting of many varieties, racing about from side to side of the circle in the most terrified fashion. It was the most pitiable sight I have ever beheld to watch the beautiful game, wearied out with running, and frightened into a state of sheer silliness, running up in a dazed condition to a little clump of men who instantly speared or even clubbed them to death. The natives had previously surrounded an enormous area of country and had driven all the game they could find towards their chief, who was sitting on a stone at one side of the circle, and who held an old shot-gun in his hand. He sent a message to me to come and join in the sport, but not only had I no time to spare, as I did not wish to be caught in the dark with an unknown drift between me and my journey's end, but the sight was so sickening that I was glad to canter away. Had I wanted another reason, I could have found it in the fact that the chief and one or two of his councillors were blazing away their cartridges as fast as they could load, utterly ignoring the fact that



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numbers of men were mixed up with the herd of game at which they were shooting. The sight, at least to one coming on the scene in cold blood, was as disgusting as it was pathetic ; and it was long before I ceased to be haunted by the expression on the faces of the graceful animals, which combined the appearance of exhaustion and terror with an appeal for pity.

So far we have been describing the lesser forms of hunting, the supreme sport of savages is that of man-hunting or war. The first time I saw natives on the war-path was in Pondoland. There had been a petty squabble between two sections of the tribe, and as I rode along, I passed hundreds of natives all mounted on ponies and armed with assegais. They came up towards me with such threatening attitude, stabbing imaginary foes as they came, and chanting their own deeds of prowess, that I imagined they were going to attack me. As they drew nearer to me they grew wilder in their gesticulations, and some of them brandished their battle-axes and grew frenzied with excitement. But they passed by me as though I had been invisible to them ; and indeed, so obsessed seemed they with the lust of battle that I suppose they hardly noticed me. The two rival clans met at a river. After they had hurled a prodigious number of angry taunts and threats at one another, and had indulged in a number of pantomimic fights with purely imaginary foes, they let off some antiquated muskets which made a tremendous amount of innocent noise, which seemed thoroughly to satisfy the warriors ; for after a furious battle of words carried on for an hour across the



## Kafir Sport

unheeding stream, the enemies parted perfectly satisfied, though no one had been even in the slightest danger of being hurt. They had evidently got a load of perilous stuff off their chest, and felt in a much sweeter mood in consequence.

The next time I saw natives on the war-path I beheld a more impressive sight. I was riding through Swaziland and came across an *impi* of, I suppose, a thousand men all armed with assegais and black ox-hide shields. The warriors had their heads decked with feathers, and round their shoulders were long strips of black ox-hide arranged as festoons which went over one shoulder and under the other armpit. They advanced slowly, every man prancing as he came, and stamping the ground furiously to mark time to the tune they were all chanting. Suddenly the whole regiment stood stock still as each man lifted an assegai high over his head and pretended to stab a prostrate foe ; at the imaginary impact of the spear on human flesh, each man shouted out a sound in imitation of the noise made by the striking of an assegai against a foe. Then the men all brandished their weapons and started chanting their own praises, making the most absurd grimaces as they described how valiantly they had slain and reslain the slain. As the tune changed, the entire regiment moved on towards me at a brisk pace, their stamping feet literally shaking the earth. The chant grew very wild, and the men raced towards me at such speed that I had to dig my spurs into my horse to get out of the way, for the warriors utterly disregarded my existence. So great was the rushing sound



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of fury that it made one feel as if nothing could withstand the charging regiment, or survive after it had passed. But suddenly some unlucky omen was observed, exactly what I know not: however, the whole mass of wild, prancing, yelling savages stopped abruptly, turned tail, and scattered terrified in all directions. Even in war-time, a regiment will behave like this if some unlucky omen, such as the sudden appearance of a terrified little hare crossing the line of march, should be observed. I know not which impressed me the more, the sense of irresistible fury of the on-rushing and boasting regiment, or the laughter-shaking sight presented by the terrified and routed army. Some years later when I went through the scare of a threatened Swazi rising, with the responsibility of the lives of women and children on my shoulders, I forgot the ludicrous elements and uncomfortably remembered the fury. How little people in England realise the price the white man pays for the redemption of South Africa from barbarism.

## CHAPTER XII

### SUPERSTITION

LIKE all primitive peoples, the Kafirs are very superstitious and are apt to fancy that the phenomena of nature are caused by the agency of personal spirits. They have no conception of the orderliness of nature, but fancy things are caused by capricious beings



## Superstition

who can be influenced in many ways. Some of their ideas are very bizarre and far-fetched. Lightning is supposed to be caused by a bird with bright red and green plumage ; some natives think that the bird throws down to the earth some of its feathers which are of a dazzling brightness, while others think that the bird itself drops from the sky and makes thunder by the noise of its impact with the earth. Yet again, other natives think that lightning is caused by a bird in the heavens that sets its fat on fire and then spits it down on to the earth ; or else they imagine in a vague and ill-defined way that "the heavens" lighten and thunder. A storm of wind and rain is thought to be under the control of State authorised magicians called rain-doctors, who can either make rain or cause it to cease when excessive. In a somewhat similar way it is thought that the growth of the crops can be increased by certain men who know how to work charms of great efficacy. A period of drought is thought to show that the ancestral spirits who preside over the affairs of the nation have been angered by the neglect of the living members of the tribe, or by the evil practices of some members of the clan. Plagues of locusts or caterpillars frequently ruin the crops, and special doctors are called in to counteract the evil by their magical charms. Thus there are many authorised magic specialists such as crop-doctors, lightning-doctors, locust-doctors, rain-doctors, war-doctors, as well as makers of love charms, each class of doctor attending to his one department and seeking only the good of the clan. Though these men work magic, they are not regarded as sorcerers, for they



## South Africa

work for social ends ; the sorcerer, the wizard and the witch, are unauthorised people who use similar magical charms for purely personal and anti-social ends of their own, and are therefore regarded as pestilent quacks and enemies of the state.

Disease is not easily accounted for, as it is thought that in the proper order of things people should not die except from old age ; but since it is obvious that many people die in the prime of life, a cause has to be discovered or invented. Should a person be struck by lightning, it is thought that the ancestral spirits want the man, and therefore no one mourns his loss, lest it should show " a will most incorrect to heaven." In many cases the people give up puzzling as to the cause of death, or else conclude that some evil person has been working witchcraft or sorcery so as to get rid of a private enemy. The methods supposed to be adopted by such sorcerers are legion : they may keep baboons in their hut, it is thought, and may send these animals during the night to administer poisonous medicines to the victims ; they may place a charm on the pathway so that the victims passing the spot become infected and slowly die ; they may change themselves by witchcraft into wild animals, such as lions or crocodiles, and may devour their enemy and then change themselves back into ordinary human beings ; they may secretly obtain something belonging to their enemy—it may be the parings of his nails or a small quantity of his hair—and may work charms on them in order that the victim may be influenced through his sympathetic union with such things. But



## Superstition

there is a method more dreaded than all these. There live within certain people "beasts" which form a part of their personality ; the mother who has such a "beast" living in her may impart it to all her children who may consequently possess a most uncanny power. One of them may be sleeping peacefully on the mat at night, and, all unknown to the person, the "beast" may leave the body and may go off and work magical practices, placing a locust, or a lizard, or a toad, or a beetle, in some enemy's stomach ; having done this, the "beast" may hie him back and enter the sleeping person, who on awaking is unconscious of what he has done in his sleep. To ward off such dangers people place a magical ring of defence round their kraals by sprinkling the bushes or the paths with special medicines given them by a doctor ; for it is thought that these "beasts" we have been talking about are unable to enter such a charmed circle unless the magical ring of defence has been broken down at some spot. A great part of a doctor's work consists in supplying such immunity-giving charms.

Diviners and doctors seem to stick at nothing ; they give people medicines to sprinkle on the river when bathing, and the people firmly believe that when they have "doctored" the water, it will be perfectly safe to bathe, even though the river should be infested with crocodiles. Should a person after charming the water be carried off by a crocodile, it is said that the medicine was too weak, or that it was unsuitable ; but no one's faith in the power of magical charms is diminished at all by such failures.



## South Africa

When a person is taken ill, the first thing is to find out the cause of the trouble. The patient goes, it may be, to a doctor who divines by means of bones, or by asking questions to which the people—no matter what question the diviner may ask—have to respond with the words “we agree.” The doctor tells by the tone of the answer whether he is on the right track or not. He may tell the patient that there is no cause for the disease and that a herb doctor should be consulted ; but in other cases the diviner may say that the patient has been bewitched and that he has some animal inside him. In that case, the patient has to go to another kind of doctor whose business it is to extract the lizard, or frog, or locust that is supposed to be in his stomach. This doctor will generally be found to work in concert with the diviner who has sent the patient to him, and will set to work with prodigious show to extract by sleight-of-hand from the patient’s mouth the lizard, or beetle, or frog that he has previously hidden about his person. When the cause of the trouble is extracted, the patient may be pronounced cured ; but that is by no means the end of the business. The patient is sent to the smelling-out doctor whose business it is to find the culprit, who, possibly in his sleep, placed this evil thing in the patient’s stomach. It is not uncommonly arranged beforehand on whom the guilt should be said to rest ; the victim is generally a person who is growing too rich, or is making himself objectionable to others. After a very impressive *seance*, the man is picked out from the crowd by the doctor who is supposed to be



## Superstition

able to detect the witch or wizard by the sense of smell. The man is confronted with the evidence of his guilt, and is shown the lizard or beetle that has been extracted from the patient's stomach. The unlucky wretch, when faced with an accusing lizard, is unable to deny the charge, and generally admits that he is the culprit, possibly saying that the deed must have been done by his "beast" which left his body while he was sleeping. But he does not seek to deny his responsibility in the matter.

In olden days the man found guilty was generally put to death in some violent way. He might be thrown over a precipice; he might be roasted to death; he might be smeared with grease and fastened to an ant-heap, and left till he was tortured to death; he might be more mercifully clubbed to death at some unexpected moment by a person appointed by the chief; or he might have been merely mulct in a heavy fine of cattle. The important thing to remember is that the people will all think the culprit had been using magical practices for his purely selfish and personal ends to the detriment of the interests of the tribe. The diviner used precisely similar powers, but he used them in an authorised fashion for the good of the tribe by defeating the knavish tricks of an anti-social wretch.



# South Africa

## CHAPTER XIII

### A PEEP INTO A KAFIR'S MIND

THE mind of the Kafir is placid and easily satisfied. A native accepts things as they are and does not worry unduly about what might have been, or even about what may be. Yet when aroused to activity by any stimulus, his brain sets to work, even though it be in a primitive fashion.

The Kafir is conscious of the fact that he can alter the course of nature by his own actions. He can move things about ; he can insure that certain things shall happen ; he can prevent other things from happening. He therefore imagines—that is to say, when he imagines at all, which is not very often—that phenomena beyond his control are caused by agents somewhat similar to himself. His mind takes the path of least resistance, and the man accepts what appears to him the simplest and easiest way of accounting for facts. He would entirely accept the modern scientific doctrine of parcimony. He soon gets confused, however, in his attempt to trace causes from the effects he sees about him. For example, the first time a Kafir who has been accustomed to see large safety-pins of uniform size is shown small safety-pins, he is apt to think that smaller pins are the children of the bigger. Lambs are obviously the offspring of sheep, and puppies of dogs : is it not rational, therefore, to suppose—half realistically, half



## A Peep into a Kafir's Mind

metaphorically—that a town is the mother of a village? Day by day he sees the sun rise and set; he concludes, therefore, that it is moved by somebody; he notices that the sun is apparently cooler at sunset than it is in the morning; he, therefore, presumes that some one has warmed it up during the night. The moon lessens and wanes night by night; the Kafir therefore concludes that somebody picks little pieces off it every night, for this seems to him the simplest explanation that can cover all the facts. Since he can see the trees, and can hear the noise their leaves make when shaking in the wind, he supposes that the trees can see him and hear what he speaks beneath their shadow. Why not? It may be a far cry from the Kafir's thought that the trees can talk to one another to Browning's line, "The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts;" but there is in the savage, as in the cultivated poet, an anthropomorphic tendency which leads him to interpret everything in terms of the most familiar—and least understood—thing he knows, and that undoubtedly is human personality.

Thus the Kafir comes to think that there are spirits everywhere—in the rivers, in the trees, in animals, in the air, and in the ground. Yet it must not be supposed that the savage is always puzzling about these spirits, for it is very rarely he thinks of such things, and it needs something a little out of the common to awaken his mind out of its dull, contented torpor. It is probable that the greater part of his life is passed in a placid enjoyment of heat and cold, of food and drink, coupled with a general sense of comfort and well-being. But if he



## South Africa

is something of an animal, he is an animal with gleams that can be brightened, deepened, and intensified to a surprising degree.

His speculations as to the origin of mankind are very crude. He imagines in a dim way that long, long ago there was a being who "broke men off" and brought them out of a bed of reeds, or out of a cave. In the different tribes belief varies with regard to the details of this myth, but most natives agree that black men "came out" first, bringing with them simply oxen and dogs, while the white men stayed behind with the Great One, for they were not in such a hurry. As a result, white men "scraped up" all sorts of cunning knowledge, learnt to do strange things the black men can never do, and also became possessed of a number of wonderful things—especially guns and gunpowder—that natives never thought of. The Kafirs think that white men are superior to them with regard to cunning, but that in all other *human* respects they are immeasurably inferior to black men, who have much more sensible ideas about justice, and right and wrong, and social customs, and the best way to spend life. There is, however, considerable difference of opinion as to where white men get all their cunning things from; but there is a very common belief that somewhere on the surface of the "great water" there lives a man with four eyes, who works night and day making European clothing, guns, saddles, tinned-meat, kettles, waggons, corrugated-iron, tools, and all the weird things white men import. As soon as the man with four eyes has finished making such articles he throws them on to the sea, so it is sup-



## A Peep into a Kafir's Mind

posed, and white men come along in ships and pick them up. Having filled their ships, they are supposed to sail into port which is thought to be only a few miles distant from this marvellous man with the four eyes.

In spite of this strange tissue of ideas in the Kafir's mind, the man is extremely shrewd, and is possessed of excellent wisdom in some directions. The working of his mind may be seen by studying some of the familiar Kafir proverbs. It is difficult to know what proverbs to quote in illustration, but here are some:—"The obstinate man will learn by the blood stain." "Pots are made while the clay is in good condition." "The cow licks the one that licks her." "A repetition will be by accident." "No clever man ever licked his own back." "Height is not reached in a hurry." "There is no beast that does not roar in his own den." "The dawn does not come twice to awaken a man." Many of these sayings can be matched by English proverbs, but they do not suffer by the comparison, for they show shrewd observation, sententious wisdom, and terse expression.

I sometimes think a Kafir passes his life in somewhat of a dull stupor, receiving but moderate pleasure from his joys, and but slight inconvenience from his pains, which do not amount to much more than a sense of discomfort, even as his pleasures probably do not as a rule amount to very much more than a general undefined sense of contentment. Yet there are striking exceptions, for some natives are extremely acute in their sensations. The average Kafir would not worry very much if he chopped off his finger, or had half-a-



## South Africa

dozen teeth pulled out, though some natives are a afraid of the dentist's forceps as are white people.

The average man is not much worried by his conscience, though even before he meets white men he is sometimes conscious that he has two hearts within him, the voice of one being loud, rough, imperious, and overbearing ; while the other has a still, small voice that warns him not to do things rather than instructs him about his positive duties. He is not much troubled by this gentle voice, however, until he pays a visit to a mission station ; then he may suddenly become profoundly disturbed, and may find his sleep broken by the most vivid and terrifying of dreams which recur night after night.

Thus the average man lives his placid life, contented with things as they are ; for it never occurs to him to worry about possible changes, or to start on the quest of a progress which his dull imagination fails to suggest to him. He accepts life at its face value, and believes that what was good enough for his father is good enough for him. Civilisation, therefore, acts as a ferment on his mind, draws his attention to himself, and sets him puzzling over a thousand thoughts that had never previously entered his thick skull.



# The Civilised Kafir

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CIVILISED KAFIR

THE civilising process commences with the clothing and spreads inwardly, if at all, at a later period. The first stage in the process can be seen best in districts such as the Transkei where a daily post-cart passes close to the kraals. Scattered through the country there are corrugated-iron stables at which the teams of mules are changed. A Kafir living in a kraal close at hand is hired to look after the animals, and apparently it is thought unseemly that, on the arrival of the post-cart, he should attend to his duties clad in his picturesque but flowing blanket. A primitive garment is ready to hand. A sack, from which the corn for feeding the mules has been emptied, has a small round hole made in it at each of the bottom angles, a larger hole being made mid-way between them. The sack is turned upside down, and the arms and head of the Kafir are placed through the openings just mentioned, and lo! the man is clothed—though it be in sack-cloth. One can well imagine how odious must be the sensation caused by the friction of the rough sacking on the skin that has never been accustomed to clothing. This, however, is but part of the price men have to pay for civilisation.

The next stage in the process is reached when the native buys a flannel or cotton shirt at a trader's store.



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Clad in such a garment, the Kafir imagines himself supremely well-dressed. I once had a native servant who rejoiced in the name of Jackets, presumably because his development had reached the coat-stage, though it had skipped the shirt-period. One day a friend of mine gave this man an old white night-shirt. Jackets grinned like a Cheshire cat as though his face were about to split in half. He promptly put the shirt on over his coat, and suddenly remembered that he had the most pressing business in different parts of the camp—it was at the building of the Orange River bridge at Norval's Pont that this occurred—and visited all his friends in turn so that the beauty of his attire might awaken spasms of jealousy in every heart.

And so the process goes on until the climax is reached at a place like Johannesburg. On any Sunday afternoon dozens of natives, clad in the most advanced European style of clothing, may be seen parading the streets. The men watch their masters and imitate them, frequently combining portions of a travelling attire with parts of a Sunday costume. Six abreast, they walk down the street so as to attract attention. One man is clad, it may be, in sporting knickerbockers, the loudest stockings imaginable, patent-leather boots and spats. So much for the nether man. The upper portion of the body is covered with a tail-coat, fancy waistcoat, and a three inch collar of the newest pattern. A ponderous steel watch-chain hangs between two waistcoat pockets, and a necktie is arranged in the most faultless manner. The Kafir completes his get-up by having his peppercorn hair frizzled out into a sort of mop, on the top of



## The Civilised Kafir

which he places a ridiculously small-sized bowler hat somewhat rakishly on one side. Another of the men may be clad in a different style, wearing brown boots striped trousers, cricket blazer, and a top-hat. The others are all dressed in different styles, and as they walk down the street they roll their eyes about from side to side so that they may be able to appreciate the admiration they expect to awaken in passers-by.

When Kafirs enter domestic service for the first time they cannot conceive the use of half the articles to be found in the kitchen. The boy, as a grown-up Kafir man is called, is told to light a fire in the cooking-stove. He disappears into the kitchen and goes up to the range which he touches in a gingerly fashion, as though it were some strange animal that might bite him. He has not the remotest idea where to light the fire, for never before in his life has he seen a chimney or an oven. He therefore places the wood either on the top of the closed range or else inside the oven, and commences to make his fire, only to be called an idiot by some white woman who cannot speak the native language, and who uses a sort of baby-talk very much like that used by Mrs. Plornish in *Little Dorrit*. When the woman sees she is not understood, she imagines that all that is required is that she should speak slowly, loudly, and with great emphasis. She therefore shouts still louder in somewhat worse English, only to come to the conclusion that the Kafir is an exceedingly foolish fellow for not being able to understand the words she screams at him. At last she makes the fire herself, and tells the boy to fill the kettle from a pail of water



## South Africa

standing in the corner of the kitchen. The boy takes up the kettle and cannot for the life of him conceive what its function is; but as he can only see one hole, he proceeds to fill the kettle by pouring water from a ladle over the spout. After five minutes' endeavour the kettle is about a quarter full, and the white woman, who has been busy about other things, at last wonders why "that stupid boy" is so slow over his work. She does not know whether to laugh or cry when she sees the cause of the slowness, but asks the boy why he never thought of removing the lid. "See," she says in a barbarous lingo, "pull lo lid pezulu like this." The boy grunts approval as the woman suits the action to the word. However, the lid has become jammed, and though the white woman goes on to explain in voluble English that it is as easy to remove the lid as kiss one's hand, she yet has to fetch a poker and use it as a lever before she can remove the offending member. In order to cover her retreat she tells the boy to put the pudding-dish in the oven, and points with her finger to the kitchen table. She leaves the room, and the boy is determined that this time at any rate he will do as he is told. He promptly picks up the dish-cloth that is lying beside the pudding-dish, and places it in the oven. Having done this, he sits down to watch the process, much as Sir Isaac Newton, having placed his watch in the saucepan of boiling water, gazed at his egg lying on the table before him.

It is no wonder that Kafirs from the kraals seem silly servants; they have had no acquaintance whatever with kitchen utensils, and cannot evolve from their inner



## The Civilised Kafir

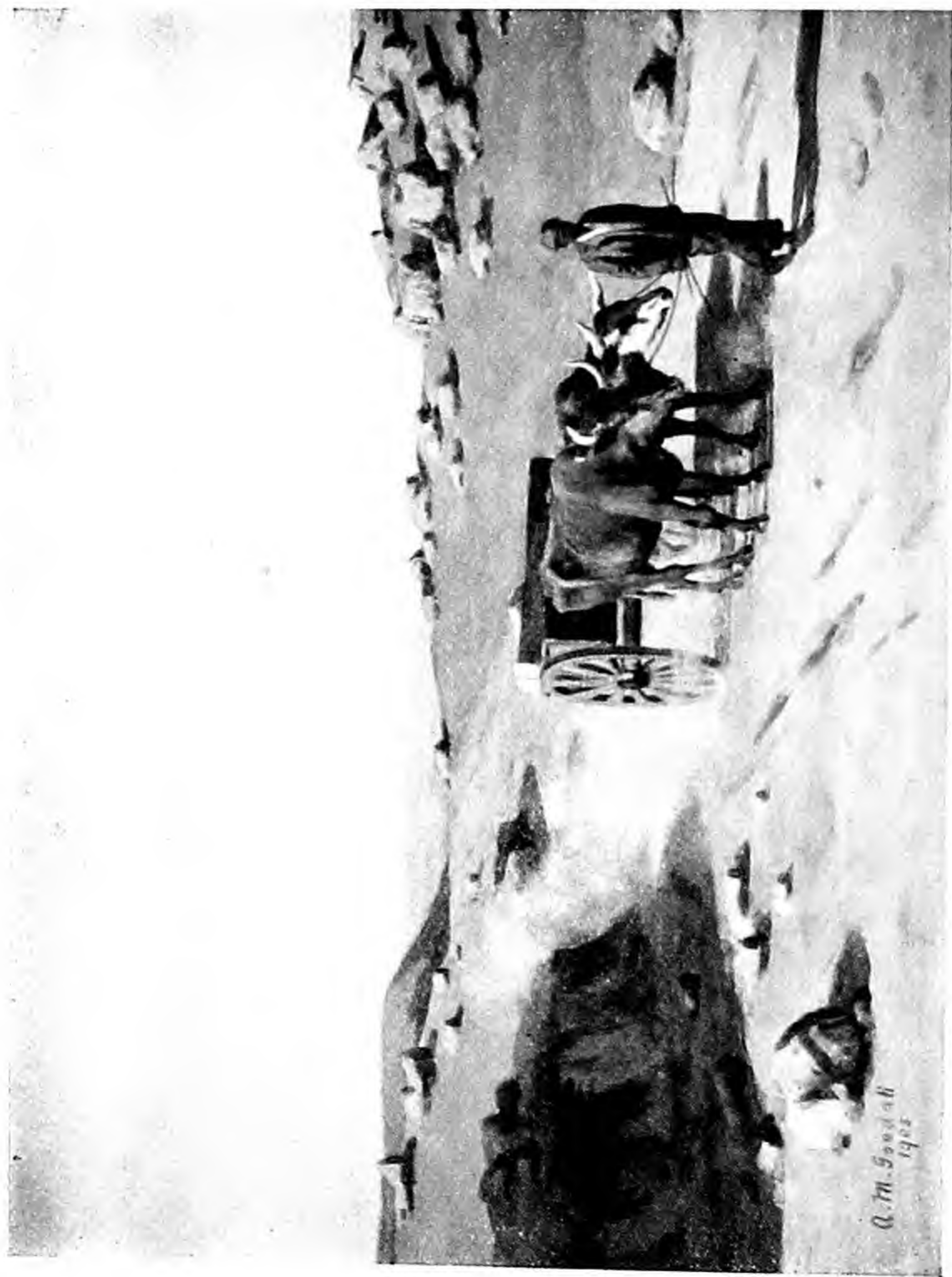
consciousness a clear idea as to the functions of some highly complicated, and to them utterly unnecessary, machines, such as mangles or roasting-jacks. But if left to their own devices, they make excellent servants—of a sort. Thus, if one has to travel a thousand miles on foot and wishes to carry crockery, or photographic plates, or fragile and expensive cameras, all one has to do is to give these things to the boys, together with a box or a piece of sacking, to point out to them that the glass or china break very easily, and then to leave them to their own devices. When I have done this, I have never had anything broken, though I have trusted them to carry my photographic kit, together with an assortment of crockery for a week's journey across country, while I have gone by a different route all alone. It must be admitted that when one sees the natives on such occasions mixing cups and saucers, photographic plates, tins of butter, and bottles, all in a chaotic jumble in a sack, one has wondered how anything could be unbroken when carried through flood and field, balanced on the heads of the boys, during a whole week's journey. In my experience, however, extending over many years of such travelling, the natives have never broken anything when warned as to the dangers and then left to go their own way. Yet the moment I have reached civilisation, white servants, and railway porters, and shipping companies, have not failed to inflict the maximum conceivable amount of damage to my property—but that need not astonish any one who has seen railway porters and sailors handling luggage.



## South Africa

In all simple and elementary things, it pays best to leave the Kaffirs to do their work in their own odd way. It is a sight for sore eyes to see them at work for example at road-making. They are utterly unlike British navvies in this matter. First of all they sit down and take snuff; when thoroughly refreshed, the twenty men, each with his pick-axe, form up in line along the curb-stone. The leader of the gang begins to chant a tune, in which all the others join; at a certain period of the chant, each of the twenty men lifts his pick-axe over his head and keeps it there until the correct *motif* of the tune is developed. At the psychological moment twenty pick-axes come down upon the ground, while twenty natives all shout out a sound something between our words "whack" and "thud." The men all grin at one another and then break into laughter. The leader of the gang moves one step forward into the road and is followed by all the others, who toe the line. The chant is repeated, and as the *motif* gives warning, pick-axes are raised or lowered as the case may be. It would be impossible to imagine a number of great big over-grown school-boys more merry over their work. Somehow or other the job gets done, though scarcely at express speed. All this, of course, is very trying to the white man fresh out from Europe, who wants everything to be done in double quick time; but that is a point of view a savage cannot be supposed to appreciate at first blush. In time, under suitable instruction and supervision, and offered a reward that appeals to them, the Kafirs come to make very decent workmen, as can be seen in any





A BULLOCK DRIVER

A.M. Goodall  
1902







# In Advance of Civilisation

of our mines at Johannesburg. But this takes time and infinite patience, for as we have seen, height is not reached in a hurry.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN ADVANCE OF CIVILISATION

THE railway is everywhere banishing romance from South Africa—that is, the romance of the early pioneering days—though it is bringing wonderful progress in its wake. Lucky are they who have had the experience of visiting the interesting parts of South Africa before the dawn of civilisation. A nostalgia of the *veld* possesses one when thinking of those good old days.

Before starting on a long tramp of five or six hundred miles through uncivilised country, it is necessary to secure native carriers. This is not always so easy as might be expected. On one occasion, on reaching the outpost of civilisation, I was told that if I wanted boys to carry my loads, I would have to walk alone seventy or eighty miles through the heart of the bush and bring back with me the native carriers I required. It was a strange experience, on one occasion, to ride a couple of hundred miles to catch a train ; but it was a stranger experience to have to walk a hundred and fifty miles before my journey really commenced.

It requires some experience to choose native carriers wisely. At first one is apt to pick out the men with



## South Africa

the best developed muscles, especially selecting those with the biggest legs. The best carriers, however, generally have thin, firm legs, for the fine-looking natives are generally apt to be somewhat flabby. There is always a tremendous amount of talk before the native carriers are ready for their start. With one consent they all begin to make excuse : this boy thinks that his load is too bulky ; that one thinks his load is too heavy ; a third boy finds that he has got a thorn in his foot ; a fourth boy discovers that his mother is ill ; a fifth declares that he has left his private store of food at a friend's hut five miles away, and that he must go and fetch it ; a sixth boy demands extra pay ; and a seventh declares that he has changed his mind and won't go at all. The hackneyed and unimaginative excuse "Mumma sick" is expected to be disregarded ; complaints as to inequality of load may safely be left to the boys to settle amongst themselves ; the demand for double pay is waived aside with a laugh ; the boy who refuses to go is told to please himself, for he is almost certain to be the first one to pick up his load and start. Fully nine-tenths of the complaints are mere bluff, the boys simply trying to find out how "green" their employer is. At last a start is made, the experienced and wary traveller taking special care to keep an eye on the cook and on the boy who carries the food ; the others may be more or less left to themselves, but these two boys must never be allowed to get out of sight.

The boys always start off in good spirits and leave camp tossing chaff and banter at one another, or chanting their own tribal songs. If the traveller is



## In Advance of Civilisation

wise, he will start at dawn, and not stop for breakfast till ten o'clock, for it is always well to get the major portion of the day's journey finished before the heat of the day. And oh, that first breakfast! A man could eat his boots from sheer hunger; and, should he have brought a little meat with him, he will think that all the cooks of Europe could never make food so appetising as does the smoke of the wood fire over which the meat is grilled.

As soon as the natives have thrown down their loads, they prepare their own meal, while some of the boys go down to the river—it is wise always to stop at a river if possible—and catch a few small fish which they roast over the fire. I am speaking now of the tribes north of Delagoa Bay, for most of the tribes in the south—except the Tongas—despise fish and refuse to eat them. The food of the carriers consists chiefly of a grain called *poco*, which is somewhat smaller than millet seed. When cooked, it makes a black mass of extremely glutinous character, and requires a stomach of about two or three ostrich-power to digest it. It is extremely economical, for it has great staying power, one meal of it serving a white man for at least a whole day. When this *poco* porridge is cooked, it is placed on some leaves which serve as a plate, and the natives sit round on their haunches and turn and turn about break off little morsels with their hands, nibbling a small portion of fish with each mouthful. The natives always share all their food with one another, and should a white man give his cook an odd sardine, all the natives in the party will have a taste of the delicacy.



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Shortly after breakfast camp is struck, loads are remade, and everybody starts off quietly. It is, however, but the treacherous calm before the storm. After walking for about an hour, the natives will probably throw down their loads and refuse to go another step unless they are given double pay. It had been agreed that no wages were to be paid till the end of the journey; all the boys had been perfectly contented with the arrangement, and, indeed, had almost given one the impression that it did not matter much whether they were ever paid or not. Now, however, they say they will not move an inch unless the stipulated wages are paid down on the spot, and unless they are promised a similar additional sum at the end of the journey. Knowing that they are now twenty miles away from civilisation they think the white man is at their mercy, and should he lose his head for a moment, or show the slightest sign of wavering, the game is lost; for Kafirs are very acute in gauging character. I must admit that the first time this trick was played upon me, it completely took me by surprise; and for a second or two I was at a loss what to do. Recovering my senses in a moment, I told the natives it was a beautiful spot at which to camp, and that I could easily stay where I was for a few days and secure other carriers. I told them they might go home at once, for I was very thankful to them for carrying my loads so far all for nothing. I then lay down in the shade and told the boys to put the goods altogether in a heap. At first there was a great *indaba* among the natives, then there were violent altercations between two sections of carriers. The dis-



## In Advance of Civilisation

cussion was carried on for a quarter of an hour, the natives retiring to a distance so as not to be overheard. Then a deputation came to me and said that they had been quite misunderstood and would gladly finish the journey at half the price stipulated, if that would please the white man. And that was the end of the trouble for the rest of the trip.

Towards sunset it is necessary to look out for a river at which to camp, and it is well to swim through it at once lest it should come on to rain in the night and so render crossing difficult. This is one of the primary rules of the road. The first thing to do after selecting a suitable spot is to make provision against the lions. The boys cut down a quantity of thornbush, and build a horseshoe shaped zareba, some ten feet high, leaving a large enough space inside to accommodate the whole party. Having done this, the boys fetch wood and water, and before long a "billy" full of water is boiling briskly. Scones or else boiled "dough-boys" are quickly cooked, and tea is made. Should no game have been shot during the day's tramp, one is reduced to the necessity of "killing a tin" of "bully" beef—that refuge of the destitute.

The dusk comes on extremely quickly, and the stars flash out in the sky. After the evening meal the whole party sits round the camp fire enjoying both the cool of the evening and the warmth of the fire, until a delightful sense of healthy tiredness—sleepiness without weariness—creeps over the company. The natives who have been clad all day in a loin-cloth made of little pieces of blue limbo, or calico, about the thickness of a pocket



## South Africa

handkerchief, spread it on the bare ground and lie down on it, placing a similar piece over their body so as to act as a blanket. So genial is the climate, and so grateful is the cool of the evening, that sometimes (when there are no mosquitoes about) the boys do not even cover themselves till they feel chilly at about three o'clock in the morning. Two fires are kept burning at the mouth of the horseshoe, and so every one feels tolerably safe from risk of attacks by lions.

And so the days pass. An indescribable sense of freedom possesses one; a man feels that the boundless *veld* belongs to him, free of all care and expense. He walks where he wills, he stops where he chooses, he shoots what he wishes, he swims the rivers, and when he has finished his day's journey, he lies down on the ground just where he is, and sleeps beneath the wide and open sky, feeling that at last he understands what it means to be filled with the sap of life. He may find the sand so hot from the merciless rays of the sun that it nearly blisters his feet through an inch of shoe-leather; he may feel half-roasted to death, as, clad in pith helmet, khaki trousers, and a flannel shirt tucked up to the elbow and open over the chest, he tramps across country; he may know that the thermometer stands at 110 or 115 in the shade; but when he thinks of the river ahead, he feels that the heat is but part of the fun, and the thought of the camp-fire and of the delight of lying in the cool night air gazing at the quiet heavens more than atones for any discomfort to be endured. And when, after three months of such glorious life, he returns to civilisation, coats, collars, and stuffy rooms,



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and the conventions of society, he feels half smothered and choked, and he wonders what has possessed the human species to undergo voluntarily such life-long penance, discomfort, and loss of the simple and wholesome joys of life.

